

LEONIDAS.

A

P O E M.

ЛНОДИАДА

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LEONIDAS.

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P O E M.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

V O L. II.

12⁸³

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LEONIDAS.

BOOK the SEVENTH.

The Argument.

Megistias delivers Melissa's message to Leonidas. Medon, her brother, conducts him to the Temple. She furnishes Leonidas with the means of executing a design, he had premeditated to annoy the enemy. They are joined by a body of mariners under the command of Æschylus, a celebrated poet and warrior among the Athenians. Leonidas takes the necessary measures; and, observing from a summit of Oeta the motions of the Persian army, expects another attack: this is renewed with great violence by Hyperanthes, Abrocomes, and the principal Persian leaders at the head of some chosen troops.

Megistias, urging to unwonted speed
His aged steps, by Dithyrambus charg'd

VOL. II.

B

With

With sage Melissa's words, had now rejoin'd

The king of Lacedæmon. At his side

Was Maron posted, watchful to receive

5

His high injunctions. In the rear they stood

Behind two thousand Locrians, deep-array'd

By warlike Medon, from Oileus sprung.

Leonidas to them his anxious mind

Was thus disclosing. Medon, Maron, hear. 10

From this low rampart my exploring eye

But half commands the action, yet hath mark'd

Enough for caution. Yon Barbarian camp,

Immense, exhaustless, deluging the ground

With myriads, still o'erflowing, may consume 15

By endless numbers, and unceasing toil

The Grecian strength. Not marble is our flesh,

Nor adamant our sinews. Silvan pow'rs,

Who dwell on Oeta, your superior aid

We must solicit. Your stupendous cliffs

20

In

In those loose rocks, and branchless trunks contain
More fell annoyance, than the arm of man.

HE ended; when Megistias. Virtuous king,
Melissa, priestess of the tuneful nine,
By their behests invites thy honor'd feet. 25
To her chaste dwelling, seated on that hill.
To conference of high import she calls
Thee, first of Grecians. Medon interpos'd.

SHE is my sister. Justice rules her ways
With piety and wisdom. To her voice 30
The nations round give ear. The muses breathe
Their inspiration through her spotless soul,
Which borders on divinity. She calls
On thee. O truly styl'd the first of Greeks,
Regard her call. Yon cliff's projecting head 35
To thy discernment will afford a scope

More full, more certain; thence thy skilful eye
Will best direct the fight. *Melissa's fire*
Was ever present to the king in thought,
Who thus to Medon. Lead, Oileus' son. 40
Before the daughter of Oileus place
My willing feet. They hasten to the cave.
Megistias, Maron follow. Through the rock,
Leonidas, ascending to the fane,
Rose like the god of morning from the cell 45
Of night, when, shedding cheerfulness and day
On hill and vale emblaz'd with dewy gems,
He gladdens nature. Lacedæmon's king,
Majestically graceful and serene,
Dispels the rigour in that solemn seat 50
Of holy sequestration. On the face
Of pensive-ey'd religion rapture glows
In admiration of the god-like man.
Advanc'd *Melissa*. He her proffer'd hand
In

Book VII. LEONIDAS. 5

In hue, in purity like snow, receiv'd. 55

A heav'n-illumin'd dignity of look

On him she fix'd. Rever'd by all, she spake.

HAIL ! chief of men, selected by the gods

For purer fame, than Hercules acquir'd.

This hour allows no pause. She leads the king 60

With Medon, Maron, and Megistias down

A slope, declining to the mossy verge,

Which terminates the mountain. While they pass,

She thus proceeds. These marble masses view, 64

Which lie dispers'd around you. They were hewn

From yonder quarry. Note those pond'rous beams,

The silvan offspring of that hill. With these

At my request th' Amphiætyons from their seat

Of gen'ral council piously decreed

To raise a dome, the ornament of Greece. 70

Observe those wither'd firs, those mould'ring oaks;

Down that declivity, half-rooted, bent,
Inviting human force—Then look below.
There lies Thermopylæ. I see, exclaims
The high-conceiving hero. I recal 75
Thy father's words and forecast. He presag'd,
I should not find his daughter's counsel vain.
He to accomplish, what thy wisdom plans,
Hath amplest means supply'd. Go, Medon, bring
The thousand peasants, from th' Oilean vale 80
Detach'd. Their leader Meliboeus bring.
Fly, Maron. Ev'ry instrument provide
To fell the trees, to drag the massy beams,
To lift the broad-hewn fragments. Are not these
For sacred use reserv'd, Megistias said ? 85
Can these be wielded by the hand of Mars
Without pollution ? In a solemn tone
The priestess answer'd. Rev'rend man, who bear'st
Pontific wreaths, and thou, great captain, hear.

Forbear

Book VII. LEONIDAS.

7

Forbear to think, that my unprompted mind, 90
Calm and sequester'd in religion's peace,
Could have devis'd a stratagem of war ;
Or, unpermitted, could resign to Mars
These rich materials, gather'd to restore
In strength and splendour yon decrepid walls, 95
And that time-shaken roof. Rejecting sleep,
Last night I lay, contriving swift revenge
On these Barbarians, whose career profane
O'erturns the Grecian temples, and devotes
Their holy bow'rs to flames. I left my couch, 100
Long ere the sun his orient gates unbarr'd.
Beneath yon beach my pensive head reclin'd.
The rivulets, the fountains, warbling round,
Attracted slumber. In a dream I saw
Calliope. Her sisters, all with harps, 105
Were rang'd around her ; as their Parian forms

Shew in the temple. Dost thou sleep, she said ?
Melissa, dost thou sleep ? The barb'rous host
Approaches Greece. The first of Grecians comes
By death to vanquish. Priestess, let him hurl 110
These marble heaps, these consecrated beams,
Our fane itself to crush the impious ranks.
The hero summon to our sacred hill.
Reveal the promis'd succour. All is due
To liberty against a tyrant's pride. 115
She struck her shell. In concert full reply'd
The sister lyres. Leonidas they sung
In ev'ry note and dialect yet known,
In measures new, in language yet to come.

SHE finish'd. Then Megistias. Dear to heav'n,
By nation's honor'd, and in tow'ring thought 121
O'er either sex pre-eminent, thy words
To me a soldier and a priest suffice.

I hesitate

Book VII. LEONIDAS. 9

I hesitate no longer. But the king,
Wrapt in ecstatic contemplation stood, 125
Revolving deep an answer, which might suit
His dignity and hers. At length he spake.

Not Lacedæmon's whole collected state
Of senate, people, ephori and kings,
Not the Amphictyons, whose convention holds 130
The universal majesty of Greece,
E'er drew such rev'rence, as thy single form,
O all-surpassing woman, worthy child
Of time-renown'd Oileus. In thy voice
I hear the goddess, Liberty. I see 135
In thy sublimity of look and port
That daughter bright of Eleutherian Jove:
Me thou hast prais'd. My conscious spirit feels,
That not to triumph in thy virtuous praise
Were want of virtue. Yet, illustrious dame, 140

Were I assur'd, that oracles delude ;
That, unavailing, I should spill my blood ;
That all the Muses of subjec'ted Greece
Hereafter would be silent, and my name
Be ne'er transmitted to recording time ; 145
There is in virtue for her sake alone,
What should uphold my resolution firm.
My country's laws I never would survive.

Mov'd at his words, reflecting on his fate,
She had relax'd her dignity of mind, 150
Had sunk in sadness ; but her brother's helm
Before her beams. Relumining her night,
He through the cave like Hesperus ascends,
Th' Oilean hinds conducting to achieve
The enterprise, she counsels. Now her ear 155
Is pierc'd by notes, shrill sounding from the vault.
Upstarts a diff'rent band, alert and light,

Athenian.

Book VII. LEONIDAS. xi

Athenian sailors. Long and sep'rate files.
Of lusty shoulders, eas'd by union, bear
Thick, well-compacted cables, wont to heave 160
The restiff anchor. To a naval pipe,
As if one soul invigorated all,
And all compos'd one body, they had trod
In equal paces, mazy, yet unbroke
Throughout their paſſage. So the spinal strength
Of ſome portentous ſerpent, whom the heats 166
Of Libya breed, indiſſolubly knit,
But flexible, a-cross the sandy plain,
Or up the mountain draws his ſpotted length.
Or where a winding excavation leads. 170
Through rocks abrupt and wild, Of stature large,
In arms, which ſhew'd simplicity of strength,
No decoration of redundant art,
With ſable horse-hair, floating down his back,
A warrior moves behind. Compos'd in gait, 175

Austerly

Austerely grave and thoughtful, on his shield
The democratic majesty he bore
Of Athens. Carv'd in emblematic bras,
Her image stood with Pallas by her side,
And trampled under each victorious foot 180
A regal crown, one Persian, one usurpt
By her own tyrants, on the well-fought plain
Of Marathon confounded. He commands
These future guardians of their country's weal,
Of gen'ral Greece the bulwarks. Their high deeds
From Artemisium, from th' empurpled shores 186
Of Salamis renown shall echo wide;
Shall tell posterity in latest times,
That naval fortitude controls the world.
Swift Maron, following, brings a vig'rous band 190
Of Helots. Ev'ry instrument they wield
To delve, to hew, to heave; and active last
Bounds Meliboeus, vigilant to urge

The

The tardy forward. To Laconia's king
Advanc'd th' Athenian leader, and began. 195

THOU godlike ruler of Eurotas, hail !
Thee by my voice Themistocles salutes,
The admiral of Athens. I conduct
By public choice the squadron of my tribe,
And Æschylus am call'd. Our chief hath giv'n 200
Three days to glory on Eubœa's coast,
Whose promontories almost rise to meet
Thy ken from Oeta's cliffs. This morning saw
The worsted foe, from Artemisium driv'n,
Leave their disabled ships, and floating wrecks 205
For Grecian trophies. When the fight was clos'd,
I was detach'd to bring th' auspicious news,
To bid thee welcome. Fortunate my keel
Hath swiftly borne me. Joyful I concur
In thy attempt. Appris'd by yonder chief, 210

Who met me landing, instant from the ships
A thousand gallant mariners I drew,
Who till the setting sun shall lend their toil.

THEMISTOCLES and thou accept my heart,
Leonidas reply'd, and closely strain'd 215
The brave, the learn'd Athenian to his breast.
To envy is ignoble, to admire
Th' activity of Athens will become
A king of Sparta, who like thee condemn'd
His country's sloth. But Sparta now is arm'd. 220
Thou shalt commend. Behold me station'd here
To watch the wild vicissitudes of war.
Direct the course of slaughter. To this post
By that superior woman I was call'd.
By long protracted fight left fainting Greece 225
Should yield, outnumber'd, my enlighten'd soul
Through her, whom heav'n enlightens, hath devis'd

To

Book VII. LEONIDAS. 15.

To whelm the num'rous, persevering foes
In hideous death, and signalize the day
With horrors new to war. The Muses prompt 230
The bright achievement. Lo ! from Athens smiles
Minerva too. Her swift, auspicious aid.
In thee we find, and these, an ancient race,
By her and Neptune cherish'd. Straight he meets
The gallant train, majestic with his arms 235
Outstretch'd, in this applauding strain he spake.

O LIB'R AL people, earliest arm'd to shield
Not your own Athens more, than gen'ral Greece,
You best deserve her gratitude. Her praise
Will rank you foremost on the rolls of fame. 240

THEY bear, they gaze, revering and rever'd.
Fresh numbers muster, rushing from the hills,
The thickets round. Melissa, pointing, spake.

I AM their leader. Natives of the hills
Are these, the rural worshippers of Pan, 245
Who breathes an ardour through their humble
minds

To join you warriors. Vassals these, not mine,
But of the Muses, and their hallow'd laws,
Administer'd by me. Their patient hands
Make culture smile, where nature seems to chide;
Nor wanting my instructions, or my pray'rs, 251

Fertility they scatter by their toil
Around this aged temple's wild domain.

Is Melibœus here ! Thou fence secure
To old Oileus from the cares of time, 255

Thrice art thou welcome. Useful, wise, belov'd,
Where'er thou sojournest, on Oeta known,
As oft the bounty of a father's love
Thou on Melissa's solitude dost pour,
Be thou director of these mountain hinds. 260

THE

TH' important labour to inspiring airs
From flutes and harps in symphony with hymns
Of holy virgins, ardent all perform,
In bands divided under diff'rent chiefs.

Huge timbers, blocks of marble to remove 265

They first attempted ; then assembled stones

Loose in their beds, and wither'd trunks, upturn

By tempests ; next dismember'd from the rock

Broad, rugged fragments ; from the mountains hew'd

Their venerable firs, and aged oaks, 270

Which, of their branches by the light'ning bar'd,

Presented still against the blasting flame

Their hoary pride unshaken. These the Greeks,

But chief th' Athenian mariners, to force

Uniting skill, with massy leavers heave, 275

With strong-knit cables drag : till, now dispos'd,

Where great Leonidas appoints, the piles

Nod o'er the Streights. This new and sudden scene

Might

Might lift imagination to belief,
That Orpheus and Amphion from their beds 280
Of ever blooming asphodel had heard
The Muses call ; had brought their fabled harps,
At whose mellifluous charm once more the trees
Had burst their fibrous bands, and marbles leap'd
In rapid motion from the quarry's womb, 285
That day to follow harmony in aid
Of gen'rous valour. Fancy might discern
Cerulean Tethys, from her coral grot
Emerging, seated on her pearly car,
With Nereids, floating on the surge below, 290
To view in wonder from the Malian bay
The Attic sons of Neptune ; who forsook
Their wooden walls to range th' Oetcean crags,
To rend the forests, and disjoin the rocks.

MEAN

MEANTIME a hundred sheep are slain. Their
limbs 295

From burning piles sume grateful. Bounty spreads
A decent board. Simplicity attends.

Then spake the priestess. Long-enduring chiefs,
Your efforts, now accomplish'd, may admit
Refection due to this hard-labour'd train, 300

Due to yourselves. Her hospitable smile
Wins her well-chosen guests, Laconia's king,
Her brother, Maron, Æschylus divine
With Acarnania's priest. Her first commands
To Melibœus sedulous and blithe 305

Distribute plenty through the toiling crowd.
Then, skreen'd beneath close umbrage of an oak,
Each care-divested chief the banquet shares.

COOL breezes, whisp'ring, flutter in the leaves,
Whose verdure, pendent in an arch, repel 310
The

The west'ring sun's hot glare. Favonius bland
His breath impregnates with exhaling sweets
From flow'ry beds, whose scented clusters deck
The gleaming pool in view. Fast by, a brook
In limpid lapses over native steps 315
Attunes his cadence to sonorous strings,
And liquid accents of Melissa's maids.

The floating air in melody respires.
A rapture mingles in the calm repast.
Uprises Æschylus. A goblet full 320
He grasps. To those divinities, who dwell
In yonder temple, this libation first,
To thee, benignant hostess, next I pour,
Then to thy fame, Leonidas. He said.
His breast, with growing heat distended, prompts 325
His eager hand, to whose expressive sign
One of the virgins cedes her sacred lyre.
Their choral song complacency restrains.

The

Book VII. L E O N I D A S.

21

The soul of music, bursting from his touch,

At once gives birth to sentiment sublime.

330

O HERCULES, and Perseus, he began,

Star-spangled twins of Leda, and the rest

Of Jove's immediate seed, your splendid acts

Mankind protected, while the race was rude ;

While o'er the earth's unciviliz'd extent

335

The savage monster, and the ruffian sway'd,

More savage still. No policy, nor laws

Had fram'd societies. By single strength

A single ruffian, or a monster fell.

The legislator rose. Three lights in Greece, 340

Lycurgus, Solon and Zaleucus blaz'd.

Then, substituting wisdom, Jove profuse

Of his own blood no longer, gave us more

In discipline and manners, which can form

A hero like Leonidas, than all

345

The

The god-begotten progeny before.

The pupils next of Solon claim the muse.

Sound your hoarse conchs, ye Tritons. You beheld
The Atlantean shape of slaughter wade

Through your astonish'd deeps, his purple arm 350
Uplifting high before th' Athenian line.

You saw bright conquest, riding on the gale,
Which swell'd their sails ; saw terror at their helms
To guide their brazen beaks on Asia's pride.

Her adamantine grapple from their decks 355
Fate threw, and ruin on the hostile fleet

Inextricably fasten'd. Sound, ye nymphs
Of Oeta's mountains, of her woods and streams,
Who hourly witness to Melissa's worth,

Ye Oreads, Dryads, Naiads, found her praise. 360
Proclaim Zaleucus by his daughter grac'd
Like Solon and Lycurgus by their sons.

LACONIA's hero, and the priestess bow'd
Their foreheads grateful to the bard sublime.
She, rising, takes the word. More sweet thy lyre 365
To friendship's ear, than terrible to foes
Thy spear in battle, though the keenest point,
Which ever pierc'd Barbarians. Close we here
The song and banquet. Hark ! a distant din
From Asia's camp requires immediate care. 370

SHE leads. Along the rocky verge they pass.
In calm delight Leonidas surveys
All in the order, which he last assign'd ;
As o'er Thermopylæ beneath he cast
A wary look. The mountain's furthest crag 375
Now reach'd, Melissa to the king began.

OBSERVE that space below, dispers'd in dales,
In hollows, winding through dissever'd rocks.

The

The slender outlet, skreen'd by yonder shrubs,
Leads to the pass. There stately to my view 380
The martial queen of Caria yester sun,
Descending, shew'd. Her loudly I reprov'd.
But she, devoted to the Persian king,
In ambush there preserv'd his flying host.
She last retreated ; but, retreating, prov'd 385
Her valour equal to a better cause.
Again I see the heroine approach.

MEGISTIAS then. I see a powerful arm,
Sustaining firm the large, emblazon'd shield,
Which, fashion'd first in Caria, we have learn'd 390
To imitate in Greece. Sublime her port
Bespeaks a mighty spirit. Priestess, look.
An act of piety she now performs,
Directing those, perhaps her Carian band,
To bear dead brethren from the bloody field. 395

Among

Among the horsemen an exalted form
Like Demaratus strikes my searching eye.
To me, recalling his transcendent rank
In Sparta once, he seems a languid sun,
Which dimly sinks in exhalations dark, 400
Enveloping his radiance. While he spake,
Intent on martial duty Medon views
The dang'rous thicket ; Lacedæmon's chief,
Around the region his consid'rate eye
Extending, marks each movement of the foe. 405

Th' imperial Persian from his lofty car
Had in the morning's early conflict seen
His vanquish'd army, pouring from the streights
Back to their tents, and o'er his camp dispers'd
In consternation ; as a river bursts 410
Impetuous from his fountain, then, enlarg'd,
Spreads a dead surface o'er some level marsh.

Th' astonish'd king thrice started from his seat;
Shame, fear and indignation rent his breast ;
As ruin irresistible were near
To overwhelm his millions. Haste, he call'd
To Hyperanthes, haste and meet the Greeks.
Their daring rage, their insolence repel.
From such dishonor vindicate our name.

415

His royal brother through th' extensive camp
Obedient mov'd. Deliberate and brave,
Each active prince from ev'ry tent remote,
The hardiest troops he summon'd. Caria's queen,
To Hyperanthes bound by firm esteem
Of worth, unrivall'd in the Persian court,
In solemn pace was now returning slow
Before a band, transporting from the field
Their slain companions to the sandy beach.

420
425
SHE

SHE stopp'd, and thus address'd him. Learn, O
prince,

From one, whose wishes on thy merit wait,
The only means to bind thy gallant brow 431

In fairest wreaths. To break the Grecian line

In vain ye struggle, unarray'd and lax,

Depriv'd of union. Try to form one band

In order'd ranks, and emulate the foe. 435

Nor to secure a thicket next the pass

Forget. Selected numbers station there.

Farewel, young hero. May thy fortune prove

Unlike to mine. Had Asia's millions spar'd

One myriad to sustain me, none had seen 440

Me quit the dang'rous contest. But the head

Of base Argestes on some future day

Shall feel my treasur'd vengeance. From the fleet

I only stay, till burial rites are paid

To these dead Carians. On this fatal strand 445

May Artemisia's grief appease your ghosts,
My faithful subjects, sacrific'd in vain.

THE hero grateful and respectful heard,
What soon his warmth neglected at the sight
Of spears, which flam'd innumerable round. 450
Beyond the rest in lustre was a band,
The Satellites of Xerxes. They forsook
Their constant orbit round th' imperial throne
At this dread crisis. To a myriad fix'd,
From their unchanging number they deriv'd 455
The title of immortals. Light their spears ;
Set in pomegranates of resplendent gold,
Or burnish'd silver, were the slender blades.
Magnificent and stately were the ranks.
The prince, commanding mute attention, spake. 460

IN two divisions part your number, chiefs.
One will I lead to onset. In my ranks

Abro-

Abrocomes, Hydarnes shall advance,
Pandates, Mindus, Intaphernes brave
To wrest this short-liv'd victory from Greece. 465

Thou, Abradates, by Sosarmes join'd,
Orontes and Mazæus, keep the rest
From action. Future succour they must lend,
Should envious fate exhaust our num'rous files.

For, O pure Mithra, may thy radiant eye 470

Ne'er see us, yielding to ignoble flight,
The Persian name dishonor. May the acts
Of our renown'd progenitors, who, led

By Cyrus, gave one monarch to the east,

Inus revive. O think, ye Persian lords, 475

What endless infamy will blast your names ;

Should Greece, that narrow portion of the earth,

Your pow'r defy : when Babylon hath low'd

Her towring crest, when Lydia's pride is quell'd

In Crœsus vanquish'd, when her empire lost 480

Ecbatana deplores. Ye chosen guard,
Your king's immortal bulwark, O reflect,
What deeds from your superior swords he claims.
You share his largest bounty. To your faith,
Your constancy and prowes he commits 485
His throne, his person, and this day his fame.

THEY wave their banners, blazing in the sun,
Who then three hours tow'r'd Hesperus had driv'n
From his meridian height. Amid their shouts
The hoarse-resounding billows are not heard. 490
Of diff'rent nations, and in diff'rent garb,
Innumerous and vary'd like the shells,
By restless Tethys scatter'd on the beach,
O'er which they trod, the multitude advanc'd,
Straight by Leonidas descry'd. The van 495
Abrocomes and Hyperanthes led,

Pindates,

Pandates, Mindus. Violent their march
Sweeps down the rocky, hollow-sounding pass.
So, where th' unequal globe in mountains swells,
A torrent rolls his thund'ring surge between 500
The steep-erected cliffs ; tumultuous dash
The waters, bursting on the pointed crags :
The valley roars ; the marble channel foams.
Th' undaunted Greeks immoveably withstand
The dire encounter. Soon th' impetuous shock 505
Of thousands and of myriads shakes the ground.
Stupendous scene of terror ! Under hills,
Whose sides, half-arching, o'er the hosts project,
The unabating fortitude of Greece
Maintains her line, th' untrain'd Barbarians charge
In savage fury. With inverted trunks, 511
Or bent obliquely from the shagged ridge,
The silvan horrors overshad the fight.

The clanging trump, the crash of mingled spears,
The groan of death, and war's discordant shouts 515
Alarm the echoes in their neighb'ring caves ;
Woods, cliffs and shores return the dreadful sound.

The END of the Seventh Book.



BOOK

LEONIDAS.

BOOK the EIGHTH.

The Argument.

Hyperanthes, discontinuing the fight, while he waits for re-enforcements, Teribazus, a Persian remarkable for his merit and learning, and highly beloved by Hyperanthes, but unhappy in his passion for Ariana, a daughter of Darius, advances from the rest of the army to the rescue of a friend in distress, who lay wounded on the field of battle. Teribazus is attacked by Diophantus, the Mantinean, whom he overcomes; then engaging with Dithyrambus, is himself slain. Hyperanthes hastens to his succour. A general battle ensues, where Diomedon distinguishes his valour. Hyperanthes and Abrocomes, partly by their own efforts, and partly by the perfidy of the Thebans, who desert the line, being on the point of forcing the Grecians, are repulsed by the Lacedæmonians. Hyperanthes composes a select body out of the Persian standing forces, and, making an improvement in their discipline, renewes the attack; upon which Leonidas changes the disposition of his

army : *Hyperanthes and the ablest Persian generals are driven out of the field, and several thousands of the Barbarians, circumvented in the pass, are entirely destroyed.*

AMID the van of Persia was a youth,
Nam'd Teribazus, not for golden stores,
Not for wide pastures, travers'd o'er by herds,
By fleece-abounding sheep, or gen'rous steeds,
Nor yet for pow'r, nor splendid honors fam'd. 5
Rich was his mind in ev'ry art divine ;
Through ev'ry path of science had he walk'd,
The votary of wisdom. In the years,
When tender down invests the ruddy cheek,
He with the Magi turn'd the hallow'd page 10
Of Zoroastres. Then his tow'ring thoughts
High on the plumes of contemplation soar'd.
He from the lofty Babylonian fane
With learn'd Chaldeans trac'd the heav'nly sphere,
There number'd o'er the vivid fires, which gleam 15

Qn.

On night's bespangled bosom. Nor unheard
Were Indian sages from sequester'd bow'rs,
While on the banks of Ganges they disclos'd
The pow'rs of nature, whether in the woods,
The fruitful glebe, or flow'r, the healing plant, 20.
The limpid waters, or the ambient air,
Or in the purer element of fire,
The realm of old Sesostris next he view'd,
Mysterious Ægypt with her hidden rites
Of Isis and Osiris. Last he sought 25
Th' Ionian Greeks, from Athens sprung, nor pass'd
Miletus by, which once in rapture heard
The tongue of Thales, nor Priene's walls,
Where wisdom dwelt with Bias, nor the seat
Of Pittacus, rever'd on Lesbian shores. 30

TH' enlighten'd youth to Susa now return'd,
Place of his birth. His merit soon was dear.

To,

To Hyperanthes. It was now the time,
That discontent and murmur on the banks
Of Nile were loud and threat'ning. Chembes there
The only faithful stood, a potent lord, 36
Whom Xerxes held by promis'd nuptial ties
With his own blood. To this Ægyptian prince
Bright Ariana was the destin'd spouse,
From the same bed with Hyperanthes born. 40
Among her guards was Teribazus nam'd
By that fond brother, tender of her weal.

TH' Ægyptian boundaries they gain. They hear
Of insurrection, of the Pharian tribes
In arms, and Chembes in the tumult slain. 45
They pitch their tents, at midnight are assaile'd,
Surpris'd, their leaders massacred, the slaves
Of Ariana captives borne away,
Her own pavilion forc'd, her person seiz'd

By ruffian hands: when timely to redeem 50
Her and th' invaded camp from further spoil
Flies Teribazus with a rally'd band,
Swift on her chariot seats the royal fair,
Nor waits the dawn. Of all her menial train
None, but three female slaves are left. Her guide,
Her comforter and guardian fate provides 56
In him, distinguish'd by his worth alone,
No prince, nor satrap, now the single chief
Of her surviving guard. Of regal birth,
But with excelling graces in her soul, 60
Unlike an eastern princess she inclines
To his consoling, his instructive tongue
An humbled ear. Amid the converse sweet
Her charms, her mind, her virtues he explores,
Admiring. Soon is admiration chang'd 65
To love; nor loves he sooner, than despairs.
From morn till ev'n her passing wheels he guards

Back

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Back to Euphrates. Oftener, as she mounts,
Or quits the car, his arm her weight sustains
With trembling pleasure. His assiduous hand 70
From purest fountains wafts the living flood.
Nor seldom by the fair-one's soft command
Would he repose him, at her feet reclin'd ;
While o'er his lips her lovely forehead bow'd,
Won by his grateful eloquence, which sooth'd 75
With sweet variety the tedious march,
Beguiling time. He too would then forget
His pains awhile, in raptures vain entranc'd,
Delusion all, and fleeting rays of joy,
Soon overcast by more intense despair ; 80
Like wintry clouds, which, op'ning for a time,
Tinge their black folds with gleams of scatter'd light,
Then, swiftly closing, on the brow of morn
Condense their horrors, and in thickest gloom
The ruddy beauty veil. They now approach 85

The

The tow'r of Belus. Hyperanthes leads
Through Babylon an army to chastise
The crime of Ægypt. Teribazus here
Parts from his princess, marches bright in steel
Beneath his patron's banner, gathers palms 90.
On conquer'd Nile. To Susa he returns,
To Ariana's residence, and bears
Deep in his heart th' immedicable wound.
But unreveal'd and silent was his pain ;
Nor yet in solitary shades he roam'd, 95.
Nor shun'd resort : but o'er his sorrows cast
A sickly dawn of gladness, and in smiles
Conceal'd his anguish ; while the secret flame
Rag'd in his bosom, and its peace consum'd : 99.
His soul still brooding o'er these mournful thoughts.

CAN I, O Wisdom, find relief in thee,
Who dost approve my passion ? From the snares

Of

Of beauty only thou wouldest guard my heart.

But here thyself art charm'd ; where softness, grace,
And ev'ry virtue dignify desire. 100

Yet thus to love, despairing to possess,

Of all the torments, by relentless fate
On life inflicted, is the most severe.

Do I not feel thy warnings in my breast,

That flight alone can save me ? I will go 105

Back to the learn'd Chaldaeans, on the banks

Of Ganges seek the fates ; where to heav'n
With thee my elevated soul shall tow'r.

O wretched Teribazus ! all conspires

Against thy peace. Our mighty lord prepares 110

To overwhelm the Grecians. Ev'ry youth

Is call'd to war ; and I, who lately pois'd

With no inglorious arm the soldier's lance,

Who near the side of Hyperanthes fought,

Must join the throng. How therefore can I fly 120

Frem

Book VIII. L E O N I D A S.

41

From Ariana, who with Asia's queens
The splendid camp of Xerxes must adorn ?
Then be it so. Again I will adore
Her gentle virtues. Her delightful voice,
Her gracious sweetnes shall again diffuse 125
Resistless magic through my ravish'd heart ;
Till passion, thus with double rage enflam'd,
Swells to distraction in my tortur'd breast,
Then—but in vain through darkness do I search
My fate—Despair and fortune be my guides. 130

THE day arriv'd, when Xerxes first advanc'd
His arms from Susa's gates. The Persian dames,
So were accustom'd all the eastern fair,
In sumptuous cars accompany'd his march,
A beauteous train, by Ariana grac'd. 135
Her Teribazus follows, on her wheels
Attends and pines. Such woes oppress the youth,
Oppress

Oppress, but not enervate. From the van
He in this second conflict had withstand'd
The threat'ning frown of adamantine Mars, 140
He singly, while his bravest friends recoil'd.
His manly temples no tiara bound.
The slender lance of Asia he disdain'd,
And her light target. Eminent he tow'r'd
In Grecian arms the wonder of his foes ; 145
Among th' Ionians were his strenuous limbs
Train'd in the gymnic school. A fulgent casque
Inclos'd his head. Before his face and chest
Down to the knees an ample shield was spread.
A pond'rous spear he shook. The well-aim'd
point 150

Sent two Phliasians to the realms of death
With four Tegæans, whose indignant chief,
Brave Hegesander, vengeance breath'd in vain,

With

With streaming wounds repuls'd. Thus far unmatched,

His arm prevail'd; when Hyperanthes call'd 155

From fight his fainting legions. Now each band

Their languid courage reenforc'd by rest.

Mean time with Teribazus thus conferr'd

Th' applauding prince. Thou much deserving

youth,

Had twenty warriors in the dang'rous van 160

Like thee maintain'd the onset, Greece had wept

Her prostrate ranks. The weary'd fight awhile

I now relax, till Abradates strong,

Orontes and Mazæus are advanc'd.

Then to the conflict will I give no pause. 165

If not by prowess, yet by endless toil

Successive numbers shall exhaust the foe.

He said. Immers'd in sadness, scarce reply'd,
But to himself complain'd the am'rous youth. 169

STILL

STILL do I languish, mourning o'er the same,
My arm acquires. Tormented heart ! thou seat
Of constant sorrow, what deceitful smiles
Yet canst thou borrow from unreal hope
To flatter life ? at Ariana's feet
What if with supplicating knees I bow, 175
Implore her pity, and reveal my love.
Wretch ! canst thou climb to yon effulgent orb,
And share the splendours, which irradiate heav'n ?
Dost thou aspire to that exalted maid,
Great Xerxes' sister, rivalling the claim 180
Of Asia's proudest potentates and kings ?
Unless within her bosom I inspir'd
A passion fervent, as my own, nay more,
Such, as dispelling ev'ry virgin fear,
Might, unrestrain'd, disclose its fond desire, 185
My love is hopeless ; and her willing hand,
Should she bestow it, draws from Asia's lord

On

On both perdition. By despair benumb'd,
His limbs their action lose. A wish for death
O'ercasts and chills his soul. When sudden cries
From Ariamnes rouse his drooping pow'rs. 191
Alike in manners they of equal age
Were friends, and partners in the glorious toil
Of war. Together they victorious chanc'd
The bleeding sons of Nile, when Ægypt's pride 200
Before the sword of Hyperanthes fell.
That lov'd companion Teribazus views
By all abandon'd, in his gore outstretch'd
The victor's spoil. His languid spirit starts ;
He rushes ardent from the Persian line ; 205
The wounded warrior in his strong embrace
He bears away. By indignation stung,
Fierce from the Grecians Diophantus sends
A loud defiance. Teribazus leaves
His rescu'd friend. His massy shield he rears ; 210

High-

High brandishing his formidable spear,
He turns intrepid on th' approaching foe.
Amazement follows. On he strides, and shakes
The plumed honors of his shining crest.
Th' ill-fated Greek awaits th' unequal fight, 215
Pierc'd in the throat, with sounding arms he falls.
Through ev'ry file the Mantineans mourn.
Long on the slain the victor fix'd his sight
With these reflections. By thy splendid arms
Thou art a Greek of no ignoble rank. 220
From thy ill fortune I perhaps derive
A more conspicuous lustre—What if heav'n
Should add new victims, such as thou, to grace
My undeserving hand? Who knows, but she
Might smile upon my trophies. Oh! vain
thought! 225
I see the pride of Asia's monarch swell
With vengeance fatal to her beauteous head.

Disperse, ye phantom hopes. Too long, torn
heart,
Hast thou with grief contended, Lo ! I plant
My foot this moment on the verge of death, 230
By fame invited, by despair impell'd
To pass th' irremeable bound. No more
Shall Teribazus backward turn his step,
But here conclude his doom. Then cease to heave,
Thou troubled bosom, ev'ry thought be calm 235
Now at th' approach of everlasting peace.

HE ended ; when a mighty foe drew nigh,
Not less, than Dithyrambus. Ere they join'd,
The Persian warrior to the Greek began.

ART thou th' unconquerable chief, who mow'd
Our battle down ? That eagle on thy shield 241
Too well proclaims thee. To attempt thy force

I rashly

I rashly purpos'd. That my single arm
Thou deign'st to meet, accept my thanks, and know,
The thought of conquest less employs my soul, 245
Than admiration of thy glorious deeds,
And that by thee I cannot fall disgrac'd.

HE ceas'd. These words the Thespian youth
return'd.

Of all the praises from thy gen'rous mouth 250
The only portion, my desert may claim,
Is this my bold adventure to confront
Thee, yet unmatch'd. What Grecian hath not
mark'd.

Thy flaming steel? From Asia's boundless camp
Not one hath equall'd thy victorious might. 255
But whence thy armour of the Grecian form?
Whence thy tall spear, thy helmet? Whence the
weight

Of

Of that strong shield ! Unlike thy eastern friends,
O if thou be'st some fugitive, who, lost
To liberty and virtue, art become 269
A tyrant's vile stipendiary, that arm,
That valour thus triumphant I deplore,
Which after all their efforts and success
Deserve no honor from the gods, or men.

HERE Teribazus in a sigh rejoin'd.
I am to Greece a stranger, am a wretch
To thee unknown, who courts this hour to die,
Yet not ignobly, but in death to raise
My name from darkness, while I end my woes.

THE Grecian then. I view thee, and I mourn.
A dignity, which virtue only bears, 271
Firm resolution, seated on thy brow,

Though grief hath dimm'd thy drooping eye,
demand

My veneration : and, whatever be
The malice of thy fortune, what the cares, 275

Infesting thus thy quiet, they create
Within my breast the pity of a friend.

Why then, constraining my reluctant hand
To act against thee, will thy might support
The unjust ambition of malignant kings, 280
That goes to virtue, liberty and peace ?

Yet free from rage, or enmity I lift
My adverse weapon. Victory I ask.

Thy life may fate for happier days reserve.

THIS said, their beaming lances they pretend,
Of hostile hate, or fury both devoid, 286
As on the Isthmian, or Olympic sands
For fame alone contending. Either host,

Pois'd

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Pois'd on their arms, in silent wonder gaze.
The fight commences. Soon the Grecian spear,
Which, all the day in constant battle worn, 291
Unnumber'd shields and corselets had transfix'd,
Against the Persian buckler, shiv'ring, breaks,
Its master's hand disarming. Then began
The sense of honor, and the dread of shame 295
To swell in Dithyrambus. Undismay'd,
He grappled with his foe, and instant seiz'd
His threat'ning spear, before th' uplifted arm
Could execute the meditated wound. 299
The weapon burst between their struggling grasp.
Their hold they loosen, bare their shining swords.
With equal swiftness to defend, or charge
Each active youth advances and recedes.
On ev'ry side they traverse. Now direct,
Obliquely now the wheeling blades descend. 305
Still is the conflict dubious ; when the Greek,

Dissembling, points his falchion to the ground,
His arm depressing, as o'ercome by toil :
While with his buckler cautious he repels
The blows, repeated by his active foe. 310

Greece trembles for her hero. Joy pervades
The ranks of Asia ; Hyperanthes strides
Before the line, preparing to receive
His friend triumphant : while the wary Greek
Calm and defensive bears th' assault. At last, 315
As by th' incautious fury of his strokes,
The Persian swung his cov'ring shield aside,
The fatal moment Dithyrambus seiz'd.
Lightdarting forward with his feet outstretch'd,
Between th' unguarded ribs he plung'd his steel. 320
Affection, grief and terror wing the speed
Of Hyperanthes. From his bleeding foe
The Greek retires, not distant, and awaits
The Persian prince. But he with watry cheeks

In speechless anguish clasps his dying friend ; 325

From whose cold lip with interrupted phrase

These accents break. O dearest, best of men !

Ten thousand thoughts of gratitude and love

Are struggling in my heart — O'erpow'ring fate

Denies my voice the utt'rance — O my friend ! 330

O Hyperanthes ! Hear my tongue unfold

What, had I liv'd, thou never shouldst have known.

I lov'd thy sister. With despair I lov'd.

Soliciting this honorable doom,

Without regret in Persia's fight and thine 335

I fall. Th' inexorable hand of fate

Weighs down his eye-lids, and the gloom of death

His fleeting light eternally o'ershades.

Him on Choaspes o'er the blooming verge

A frantic mother shall bewail ; shall strew 340

Her silver tresses in the crystal wave :

While all the shores re-echo to the name

Of Teribazus lost. Th' afflicted prince,

Contemplating in tears the pallid corse,

Vents in these words the bitterness of grief.

345

OH ! Teribazus ! Oh ! my friend, whose loss

I will deplore for ever. Oh ! what pow'r,

By me, by thee offended, clos'd thy breast

To Hyperanthes in distrust unkind !

She should, she must have lov'd thee—Now no more

Thy placid virtues, thy instructive tongue

351

Shall drop their sweetness on my secret hours.

But in complaints doth friendship waste the time,

Which to immediate vengeance should be giv'n ?

HE ended, rushing furious on the Greek ;

355

Who, while his gallant enemy expir'd,

While Hyperanthes tenderly receiv'd

The last embraces of his gasping friend,

Stood

Stood nigh, reclin'd in sadness on his shield,
And in the pride of victory repin'd. 360
Unmark'd, his foe approach'd. But forward sprung
Diomedon. Before the Thespian youth
Aloft he rais'd his targe, and loudly thus.

HOLD thee, Barbarian, from a life more worth,
Than thou and Xerxes with his host of slaves. 365

His words he seconds with his rapid lance.
Soon a tremendous conflict had ensu'd ;
But Intaphernes, Mindus, and a croud
Of Persian lords, advancing, fill the space
Betwixt th' encount'ring chiefs. In mutual wrath,
With fru'tless efforts they attempt the fight. 371
So rage two bulls along th' opposing banks
Of some deep flood, which parts the fruitful mead.
Defiance thunders from their angry mouths

In vain : in vain the furrow'd sod they rend ; 375
Wide rolls the stream, and intercepts the war.

As by malignant fortune if a drop
Of moisture mingles with a burning mass
Of liquid metal, instant shew'rs of death 380
On ev'ry side th' exploding fluid spreads ;
So disappointment irritates the flame
Of fierce Platæa's chief, whose vengeance bursts
In wide destruction. Embas, Daucus fall,
Arsæus, Ochus, Mendes, Artias die ; 385
And ten most hardy of th' immortal guard,
To shivers breaking on the Grecian shield
Their gold embellish'd weapons, raise a mound
O'er thy pale body, O in prime destroy'd,
Of Asia's garden once the fairest plant, 390
Fall'n Teribazus ! Thy distracted friend
From this thy temporary tomb is dragg'd

By

By forceful zeal of satraps to the shore ;
Where then the brave Abrocomes arrang'd
The succours new, by Abradates brought, 395
Orontes and Mazæus. Turning swift,
Abrocomes inform'd his brother thus.

STRONG reenforcement from th' immortal guard
Pandates bold to Intaphernes leads,
In charge to harass by perpetual toil 400
Those Grecians next the mountain. Thou unite
To me thy valour. Here the hostile ranks
Less stable seem. Our joint impression try ;
Let all the weight of battle here impend.
Rouse, Hyperanthes. Give regret to winds.
Who hath not lost a friend this direful day ? 405
Let not our private cares assist the Greeks
Too strong already ; or let sorrow act :
Mourn and revenge. These animating words

Send Hyperanthes to the foremost line.

His vengeful ardour leads. The battle joins. 410,

WHO stemm'd this tide of onset ? Who imbru'd
His shining spear the first in Persian blood ?
Eupalamus. Artembares he slew
With Derdas fierce, whom Caucasus had rear'd
On his tempestuous brow, the savage sons 415
Of violence and rapine. But their doom
Fires Hyperanthes, whose vindictive blade
Arrests the victor in his haughty course.

Beneath the strong Abrocomes o'erwhelm'd,

Melissus swells the number of the dead. 420

None could Mycenæ boast of prouder birth,

Than young Melissus, who in silver mail

The line embellish'd. He in Cirrha's mead,

Where high Parnassus from his double top

O'ershades the Pythian games, the envy'd prize 425

Of

Of fame obtain'd. Low sinks his laurell'd head
In death's cold night ; and horrid gore deforms
The graceful hair. Impatient to revenge
Aristobulus strides before the van.

A storm of fury darkens all his brow.

430

Around he rolls his gloomy eye. For death
Is Alyattes mark'd, of regal blood,
Deriv'd from Croesus, once imperial lord

Of nations. Him the nymphs of Halys wept ;

When, with delusive oracles beguil'd

435

By Delphi's god, he pass'd their fatal waves

A mighty empire to dissolve : nor knew

Th' ill-destin'd prince, that envious fortune watch'd

That direful moment from his hand to wrest

The sceptre of his fathers. In the shade

440

Of humble life his race on Tmolus' brow

Lay hid ; till, rous'd to battle, on this field

Sinks Alyattes, and a royal breed.

In

In him extinct foreyer. Lycis dies,
For boist'rous war ill-chosen. He was skill'd 445
To tune the lulling flute, and melt the heart;
Or with his pipe's awak'ning strain allure
The lovely dames of Lydia to the dance.
They on the verdant level graceful mov'd
In vary'd measures; while the cooling breeze 450
Beneath their swelling garments wanton'd o'er
Their snowy breasts, and smooth Cayster's stream,
Soft-gliding, murmur'd by. The hostile blade
Draws forth his entrails. Prone he falls. Not long
The victor triumphs. From the prostrate corse 455
Of Lycis while insulting he extracts
The reeking weapon, Hyperanthes' steel
Invades his knee, and cuts the sinewy cords.
The Mycenæans with uplifted shields,
Corinthians and Phliasians close around 450
The wounded chieftain. In redoubled rage

The

The contest glows. Abrocomes incites
Each noble Persian. Each his voice obeys.
Here Abradates, there Mazæus press,
Orontes and Hydarnes. None retire 455
From toil, or peril. Urg'd on ev'ry side,
Mycenæ's band to fortune leave their chief.
Despairing, raging, destitute he stands,
Propt on his spear. His wound forbids retreat.
None, but his brother, Eumenes, abides 460
The dire extremity. His studded orb
Is held defensive. On his arm the sword
Of Hyperanthes rapidly descends.
Down drops the buckler, and the sever'd hand
Resigns its hold. The unprotected pair 465
By Asia's hero to the ground are swept;
As to a reaper crimson poppies low'r
Their heads luxuriant on the yellow plain.
From both their breasts the vital currents flow,

And

And mix their streams. Elate the Persians pour 470
Their numbers, deep'ning on the foe dismay'd.
The Greeks their station painfully maintain.
This Anaxander saw, whose faithless tongue
His colleague Leontiades bespake. //

THE hour is come to serve our Persian friends.
Behold, the Greeks are press'd. Let Thebes retire,
A bloodless conquest yielding to the king. 477

THIS said, he drew his Thebans from their post,
Not with unpunish'd treachery. The lance
Of Abradates gor'd their foul retreat ; 480
Nor knew the Afian chief, that Asia's friends
Before him bled. Mean time, as mighty Jove,
Or he more ancient on the throne of heav'n,
When from the womb of Chaos dark the world
Emerg'd to birth, where'er he view'd the jar 485

Of

Of atoms yet discordant and unform'd,
Confusion thence with pow'rful voice dispell'd,
'Till light and order universal reign'd ;
So from the hill Leonidas survey'd
The various war. He saw the Theban rout ; 490
That Corinth, Phlius and Mycenæ look'd
Affrighted backward. Instantly his charge
Is borne by Maron, whom obedience wings,
Precipitating down the sacred cave,
That Sparta's ranks, advancing, should repair 495
The disunited phalanx. Ere they move,
Dieneces inspires them. Fame, my friends,
Calls forth your valour in a signal hour.
For you this glorious crisis she reserv'd
Laconia's splendour to assert. Young man, 500
Son of Megistias, follow. He conducts
Th' experienc'd troop. They lock their shields,
and, wedg'd

In

In dense arrangement, reposess the void,
Left by the faithless Thebans, and repulse
Th' exulting Persians. When with efforts vain 505
These oft renew'd the contest, and recoil'd,
As oft confounded with diminish'd ranks ;
Lo ! Hyperanthes blush'd, repeating late
The words of Artemisia. Learn, O chiefs,
The only means of glory and success. 510
Unlike the others, whom we newly chac'd,
These are a band, selected from the Greeks,
Perhaps the Spartans, whom we often hear
By Demaratus prais'd. To break their line
In vain we struggle, unarray'd and lax, 515
Depriv'd of union. Do not we preside
O'er Asia's armies, and our courage boast,
Our martial art above the vulgar herd ?
Let us, ye chiefs, attempt in order'd ranks
To form a troop, and emulate the foe. 520

THEY

THEY wait not dubious. On the Malian shore
In gloomy depth a column soon is form'd
Of all the nobles, Abradates strong,
Orontes bold, Mazzæus, and the might
Of brave Abrocomes with each, who bore 525
The highest honors, and excell'd in arms ;
Themselves the lords of nations, who before
The throne of Xerxes tributary bow'd.
To these succeed a chosen number, drawn
From Asia's legions, vaunted most in fight ; 530
Who from their king perpetual stipends share ;
Who, station'd round the provinces, by force
His tyranny uphold. In ev'ry part
Is Hyperanthes active, ardent seen
Throughout the huge battalion. He adjusts 535
Their equal range, then cautious, lest on march
Their unaccustom'd order should relax,
Full in the center of the foremost rank

Orontes plants, committing to his hand
Th' imperial standard ; whose expanded folds 540
Glow'd in the air, presenting to the sun
The richest dye of Tyre. The royal bird
Amid the gorgeous tincture shone express'd
In high-embroider'd gold. The wary prince
On this conspicuous, leading sign of war 545
Commands each satrap, posted in the van,
To fix his eye regardful, to direct
By this alone his even pace and slow,
Retiring, or advancing. So the star,
Chief of the spangles on that fancy'd bear, 550
Once an Idæan nymph, and nurse of Jove,
Bright Cynosura to the Boreal pole
Attracts the sailor's eye ; when distance hides
The headland signals, and her guiding ray,
New-ris'n, she throws. The hero next appoints,
That ev'ry warrior through the length'ning files,
Observing

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Observing none, but those before him plac'd, 557
Shall watch their motions, and their steps pursue.
Nor is th' important thicket next the pass
Forgot. Two thousand of th' immortal guard 560
That station seize. His orders all perform'd,
Close by the standard he assumes his post.
Intrepid thence he animates his friends.

HEROIC chieftains, whose unconquer'd force
Rebellious *Egypt*, and the Libyan felt, 565
Think, what the splendour of your former deeds
From you exacts. Remember, from the great
Illustrious actions are a debt to fame.
No middle path remains for them to tread,
Whom she hath once ennobled. Lo ! this day
By trophies new will signalize your names, 570
Or in dishonor will forever cloud.

He

He said, and vig'rous all to fight proceed.

As, when tempestuous Eurus stems the weight
Of western Neptune, struggling through the streights,
Which bound Alcides' labours, here the storm 575
With rapid wing reverberates the tide ;
There the contending surge with furrow'd tops
To mountains swells, and, whelming o'er the beach
On either coast, impells the hoary foam
On Mauritanian and Iberian strands : 580
Such is the dreadful onset. Persia keeps
Her foremost ranks unbroken, which are fill'd
By chosen warriors ; while the num'rous croud,
Though still promiscuous pouring from behind,
Give weight and pressure to th' embattled chiefs, 585
Despising danger. Like the mural strength
Of some proud city, bulwark'd round and arm'd
With rising tow'rs to guard her wealthy stores,
Immoveable, impenetrable stood

Laco-

Laconia's ferry'd phalanx, In their face 590

Grim tyranny her threat'ning fetters shakes, 590

Red havoc grinds insatiable his jaws.

Greece is behind, entrusting to their swords

Her laws, her freedom, and the sacred urns

Of their forefathers. Present now to thought 595

Their altars rise, the mansions of their birth,

Whate'er they honor, venerate and love.

BRIGHT in the Persian van th' exalted lance
Of Hyperanthes flam'd. Beside him press'd

Abrocomes, Hydarnes, and the bulk 600

Of Abradates terrible in war.

Firm, as a Memphian pyramid, was seen

Dieneces; while Agis close in rank

With Menalippus, and the added strength

Of dauntless Maron, their connected shields 605

Upheld. Each unrelax'd array maintains

The conflict undecided; nor could Greece

Repel

Repel the adverse numbers, nor the weight
Of Asia's band Select remove the Greeks.

SWIFT from Laconia's king, perceiving soon
The Persian's new arangement, Medon flew, 611
Who thus the staid Dieneces address'd.

LEONIDAS commands the Spartan ranks
To measure back some paces. Soon, he deems,
The unexperienc'd foes in wild pursuit 615
Will break their order. Then the charge renew.

THIS heard, the signal of retreat is giv'n.
The Spartans seem to yield. The Persians stop.
Astonishment restrains them, and the doubt
Of unexpected victory. Their floth
Abrocomes awakens. By the sun 620
They fly before us. My victorious friends,
Do you delay to enter Greece. Away,

Rush

Rush on intrepid. I already hear
Our horse, our chariots thund'ring on her plains.
I see her temples wrapt in Persian fires. 625

He spake. In hurry'd violence they roll
Tumultuous forward. All in headlong pace
Disjoin their order, and the line dissolve.
This when the sage Dieneces descries, 630
The Spartans halt, returning to the charge
With sudden vigour. In a moment pierc'd
By his resistless steel, Orontes falls,
And quits th' imperial banner. This the chief
In triumph waves. The Spartans press the foe. 635
Close-wedg'd and square, in flow, progressive pace
O'er heaps of mangled carcases and arms
Invincible they tread. Composing flutes
Each thought, each motion harmonize. No rage
Untunes their souls. The phalanx yet more deep

Of

Of Medon follows ; while the lighter bands 641
Glide by the flanks, and reach the broken foe.

Amid their flight what vengeance from the arm
Of Alpheus falls ? O'er all in swift pursuit
Was he renown'd. His active feet had match'd 645
The son of Peleus in the dusty course ;
But now the wrongs, the long-remember'd wrongs
Of Polydorus animate his strength
With ten fold vigour. Like th' empurpled moon,
When in eclipse her silver disk hath lost 650
The wonted light, his buckler's polish'd face
Is now obscur'd ; the figur'd bosom drop
In crimson, spouting from his deathful strokes.

As, when with horror wing'd, a whirlwind rends
A shatter'd navy ; from the ocean cast, 655
Enormous fragments hide the level beach ;
Such as dejected Persia late beheld
On Thessaly's unnavigable strand :

Thus

Thus o'er the champain satraps lay bestrewn
By Alpheus, persevering in pursuit 660
Beyond the pass. Not Phoebus could inflict
On Niobè more vengeance, when, incens'd
By her maternal arrogance, which scorn'd
Latona's race, he twang'd his ireful bow,
And one by one from youth and beauty hurl'd 165
Her sons to Pluto; nor severer pangs
That mother felt, than pierc'd the gen'rous soul
Of Hyperanthes, while his noblest friends
On ev'ry side lay gasping. With despair
He still contends. Th' immortals from their stand
Behind th' entangling thicket next the pass 671
His signal rouses. Ere they clear their way,
Well-caution'd Medon from the close defile
Two thousand Locrians pours. An aspect new
The fight assumes. Through implicated shrubs
Confusion waves each banner. Falchions, spears

And shields are all encumber'd; till the Greeks
Had forc'd a passage to the yielding foe. 678

Then Medon's arm is felt. The dreadful boar,
Wide-wasting once the Calydonian fields, 680

In fury breaking from his gloomy lair,
Rang'd with less havoc through unguarded folds,

Than Medon, sweeping down the glitt'ring files,
So vainly styl'd immortal. From the cliff
Divine Melissa, and Laconia's king 685

Enjoy the glories of Oileus' son.
Fierce Alpheus too, returning from his chace,
Joins in the slaughter. Ev'ry Persian falls.

To him the Locrian chief. Brave Spartan,
thanks.

Through thee my purpose is accomplish'd full. 690
My phalanx here with levell'd rows of spears
Shall guard the shatter'd bushes. Come what may

From

I.

Book VIII. LEONIDAS. 75

From Asia's camp, th' assailant, flank'd and
driv'n
Down yonder slope, shall perish. Gods of Greece,
You shall behold your fanes profusely deck'd 695
In splendid off'rings from Barbarian spoils,
Won by your free-born supplicants this day.

THIS said, he forms his ranks. Their threat-
ning points
Gleam through the thicket, whence the shiv'ring
foes
Avert their sight, like passengers dismay'd, 700
Who on their course by Nile's portentous banks
Descry in ambush of perfidious reeds
The crocodile's fell teeth. Contiguous lay
Thernopylæ. Dieneces secur'd
The narrow mouth. Two lines the Spartans
shew'd, 705

One tow'rs the plain observ'd the Persian camp ;
One, led by Agis, fac'd th' interior pass.

Not yet discourag'd, Hyperanthes strives
The scatter'd host to rally. He exhorts,
Entreats, at length indignant thus exclaims. 710

DEGEN'RATE Persians ! to sepulchral dust
Could breath return, your fathers from the tomb
Would utter groans. Inglorious, do ye leave
Behind you Persia's standard to adorn
Some Grecian temple ? Can your splendid cars, 715
Voluptuous couches, and delicious boards,
Your gold, your gems, ye satraps, be preserv'd
By cowardice and flight ? The eunuch slave
Will scorn such lords, your women loath your
beds.

Book VIII. LEONIDAS.

77

Few hear him, fewer follow; while the fight
His unabating courage oft renews, 721.
As oft repuls'd with danger: till, by all
Deserted, mixing in the gen'ral rout,
He yields to fortune, and regains the camp.
In short advances thus the dying tide 725
Beats for awhile against the shelving strand,
Still by degrees retiring, and at last
Within the bosom of the main subsides.

THOUGH Hyperanthes from the fight was driv'n,
Close to the mountain, whose indented side 730
There gave the widen'd pass an ample space
For numbers to embattle, still his post
Bold Intaphernes underneath a cliff
Against the firm Platæan line maintain'd.
On him look'd down Leonidas like Death, 735
When, from his iron cavern call'd by Jove,

E 3

He

He stands gigantic on a mountain's head;
Whence he commands th' affrighted earth to quake,
And, crags and forests in his direful grasp
High-wielding, dashes on a town below, 740
Whose deeds of black impiety provoke
The long-enduring gods. Around the verge
Of Oeta, curving to a crescent's shape,
The marbles, timbers, fragments lay amas'd.
The Helots, peasants, mariners attend 745
In order nigh Leonidas. They watch
His look. He gives the signal. Rous'd at once
The force, the skill, activity and zeal
Of thousands are combin'd. Down rush the piles.
Trees, roll'd on trees, with mingled rock descend,
Unintermitt'd ruin. Loud resound 751
The hollow trunks against the mountain's side.
Swift bounds each craggy mass. The foes below
Look up aghast, in horror shrink and die.

Whose

Whole troops, o'erwhelm'd beneath th' enormous
load,

755

Lie hid and lost, as never they had known

A name, or being. Intaphernes clad

In regal splendour, progeny of kings,

Who rul'd Damascus, and the Syrian palms,

Here slept forever. Thousands of his train 760

In that broad space the ruins had not reach'd.

Back to their camp a passage they attempt

Through Lacedæmon's line. Them Agis stopp'd.

Before his powerful arm Pandates fell,

Sosarmes, Tachos. Menalippus dy'd 765

His youthful steel in blood. The mightier spear

Of Maron pierc'd battalions, and enlarg'd

The track of slaughter. Backward turn'd the rout,

Nor found a milder fate. Th' unweary'd swords

Of Dithyrambus and Diomedon,

770

Who from the hill are wheeling on their flank,

Still flash tremendous. To the shore they fly,

At once envelop'd by successive bands

Of diff'rent Grecians. From the gulph profound

Perdition here inevitable frowns,

775

While there, encircled by a grove of spears,

They stand devoted hecatombs to Mars.

Now not a moment's interval delays

Their gen'ral doom ; but down the Malian steep

Prone are they hurry'd to th' expanded arms

780

Of horror, rising from the oozy deep,

And grasping all their numbers, as they fall.

The dire confusion like a storm invades

The chafing surge. Whole troops Bellona rolls

In one vast ruin from the craggy ridge.

785

O'er all their arms, their ensigns, deep-engulph'd,

With hideous roar the waves forever close.

The END of the Eighth Book.

LEONI-

LEONIDAS.

BOOK the NINTH.

The Argument.

Night coming on, the Grecians retire to their tents. A guard is placed on the Phocian wall under the command of Agis. He admits into the camp a lady, accompanied by a single slave, and conducts them to Leonidas; when she discovers herself to be Ariana, sister of Xerxes and Hyperanthes, and sues for the body of Teribazus; which being found among the slain, she kills herself upon it. The slave, who attended her, proves to be Polydorus, brother to Alpheus and Maron, and who had been formerly carried into captivity by a Phœnician pirate. He relates before an assembly of the chiefs a message from Demaratus to the Spartans, which discloses the treachery of the Thebans, and of Epialtes, the Malian, who had undertaken to lead part of the Persian army through a pass among the mountains of Oeta. This information throws the council into a great tu-

mult, which is pacified by Leonidas, who sends Alpheus to observe the motions of these Persians, and Dieneces with a party of Lacedæmonians to support the Phocians, with whom the defence of these passages in the hills had been entrusted. In the mean time Agis sends the bodies of Teribazus and Ariana to the camp of Xerxes.

IN sable vesture, spangled o'er with stars,
The night assum'd her throne. Recall'd from

war,

Their toil, protracted long, the Greeks forgot,

Dissolv'd in silent slumber, all, but those,

Who watch th' uncertain perils of the dark, 5

A hundred warriors. Agis was their chief.

High on the wall, intent the hero sat.

Fresh winds across the undulating bay

From Asia's host the various din convey'd

In one deep murmur, swelling on his ear. 10

When by the sound of footsteps down the pass

Alarm'd, he calls aloud. What feet are these,

Which

Which beat the echoing pavement of the rock ?

Reply, nor tempt inevitable fate.

A VOICE reply'd. No enemies we come, 15

But crave admittance in an humble tone.

THE Spartan answers. Through the midnight

shade

What purpose draws your wand'ring steps abroad ?

To whom the stranger. We are friends to

Greece.

Through thy assistance we implore access 20

To Lacedæmon's king. The cautious Greek

Still hesitates ; when musically sweet

A tender voice his wond'ring ear allures.

O GEN'ROUS warrior, listen to the pray'r 25

Of

Of one distress'd, whom grief alone hath led
Through midnight shades to these victorious tents,
A wretched woman, innocent of fraud.

THE chief, descending, through th' unfolded
gates

Upheld a flaming torch. The light disclos'd 30
One first in servile garments. Near his side
A woman graceful and majestic stood,
Not with an aspect, rivalling the pow'r
Of fatal Helen, or th' insinuating charms
Of love's soft queen, but such, as far surpass'd, 35
Whate'er the lilly, blending with the rose,
Spreads on the cheek of beauty soon to fade ;
Such, as express'd a mind, by wisdom rul'd,
By sweetnes temper'd ; virtues's purest light
Illumining the countenance divine : 40
Yet could not soften rig'rous fate, nor charm

Malig-

Malignant fortune to revere the good ;
Which oft with anguish rends a spotless heart,
And oft associates wisdom with despair.
In courteous phrase began the chief humane. 45

EXALTED fair, whose form adorns the night,
Forbear to blame the vigilance of war.
My slow compliance to the rigid laws
Of Mars impute. In me no longer pause
Shall from the presence of our king withhold 50
This thy apparent dignity and worth.

HERE ending, he conducts her. At the call
Of his lov'd brother from his couch arose
Leonidas. In wonder he survey'd
Th' illustrious virgin, whom his presence aw'd. 55
Her eye submissive to the ground declin'd
In veneration of the godlike man.

His

His mien, his voice her anxious dread dispel,
Benevolent and hospitable thus.

THY looks, fair stranger, amiable and great, 60
A mind delineate, which from all commands
Supreme regard. Relate, thou noble dame,
By what relentless destiny compell'd,
Thy tender feet the paths of darkness tread ;
Rehearse th' afflictions, whence thy virtue mourns.

ON her wan cheek a sudden blush arose 66
Like day, first dawning on the twilight pale ;
When, wrapt in grief, these words a passage found.

IF to be most unhappy, and to know,
That hope is irrecoverably fled ; 70
If to be great and wretched may deserve
Commiseration from the brave : behold,

Thou

Thou glorious leader of unconquer'd bands,
Behold, descended from Darius' loins,
Th' afflicted Ariana ; and my pray'r 25
Accept with pity, nor my tears disdain.
First, that I lov'd the best of human race,
Heroic, wise, adorn'd by ev'ry art,
Of shame unconscious doth my heart reveal.
This day, in Grecian arms conspicuous clad, 80
He fought, he fell. A passion, long conceal'd,
For me alas ! within my brother's arms
His dying breath resigning, he disclos'd.
Oh ! I will stay my sorrows ! will forbid
My eyes to stream before thee, and my breast, 85
O'erwhelm'd by anguish, will from sighs restrain !
For why should thy humanity be griev'd
At my distress, why learn from me to mourn
The lot of mortals, doom'd to pain and woe.

Hear

Hear then, O king, and grant my sole request, 90
To seek his body in the heaps of slain.

THUS to the hero su'd the royal maid,
Resembling Ceres in majestic woe,
When supplicating Jove from Stygian gloom,
And Pluto's black embraces to redeem 95
Her lov'd and lost Proserpina. Awhile
On Ariana fixing stedfast eyes,
These tender thoughts Leonidas recall'd.

SUCH are thy sorrows, O for ever dear,
Who now at Lacedæmon dost deplore 100
My everlasting absence. Then aside
He turn'd and sigh'd. Recov'ring, he address'd
His brother. Most beneficent of men,
Attend, assist this princess. Night retires
Before the purple-winged morn. A band 105

Is call'd. The well-remember'd spot they find,
Where Teribazus from his dying hand
Dropt in their sight his formidable sword.
Soon from beneath a pile of Asian dead
They draw the hero, by his armour known. 110

THEN, Ariana, what transcending pangs
Were thine ! what horrors ! In thy tender breast
Love still was mightiest. On the bosom cold
Of Teribazus, grief-distracted maid,
Thy beauteous limbs were thrown. Thy snowy
hue 115

The clotted gore disfigur'd. On his wounds
Loose flow'd thy hair, and, bubbling from thy eyes,
Impetuous sorrow lav'd th' empurpled clay.
When forth in groans these lamentations broke,

O TORN for ever from these weeping eyes ! 120

Thou,

Thou, who despairing to obtain a heart,
Which then most lov'd thee, didst untimely yield
Thy life to fate's inevitable dart
For her, who now in agony reveals
Her tender passion, who repeats her vows 125
To thy deaf ear, who fondly to her own
Unites thy cheek insensible and cold.
Alas ! do those unmoving, ghastly orbs
Perceive my gushing sorrow ! Can that heart
At my complaint dissolve the ice of death 130
To share my suff'rings ! Never, never more
Shall Ariana bend a list'ning ear
To thy enchanting eloquence, nor feast
Her mind on wisdom from thy copious tongue !
Oh ! bitter, insurmountable distress ! 135

SHE could no more. Invincible despair
Suppress'd all utt'rance. As a marble form,

Fix'd

Fix'd on the solemn sepulcher, inclines
The silent head in imitated woe
O'er some dead hero, whom his country lov'd; 140
Entranc'd by anguish, o'er the breathless clay
So hung the princess. On the gory breach,
Whence life had issu'd by the fatal blow,
Mute for a space and motionless she gaz'd ;
When thus in accents firm. Imperial pomp, 145.
Foe to my quiet, take my last farewell.
There is a state, where only virtue holds
The rank supreme. My Teribazus there
From his high order must descehd to mine.

THEN with no trembling hand, no change of
look 150

She drew a poniard, which her garment veil'd ;
And instant sheathing in her heart the blade,
On her slain lover silent sunk in death.

The

The unexpected stroke prevents the care
Of Agis, pierc'd by horror and distress 155
Like one, who, standing on a stormy beach,
Beholds a found'ring vessel, by the deep
At once engulf'd ; his pity feels and mourns,
Depriv'd of pow'r to save : so Agis view'd
The prostrate pair. He dropp'd a tear and thus. 165

OH ! much lamented ! Heavy on your heads
Hath evil fall'n, which o'er your pale remains
Commands this sorrow from a stranger's eye.
Illustrious ruins ! May the grave impart
That peace, which life deny'd ! And now receive
This pious office from a hand unknown. 166

He spake, unclasping from his shoulders broad
His ample robe. He strew'd the waving folds

O'er

O'er each wan visage, turning then, address'd
The slave, in mute dejection standing near. 170

THOU, who attendant on this hapless fair,
Hast view'd this dreadful spectacle, return.
These bleeding reliques bear to Persia's king,
Thou with four captives, whom I free from bonds.

ART thou a Spartan, interrupts the slave? 175
Dost thou command me to return, and pine
In climes unbless'd by liberty, or laws?
Grant me to see Leonidas. Alone
Let him decide, if wretched, as I seem,
I may not claim protection from this camp. 180

WHOE'ER thou art, rejoins the chief, amaz'd,
But not offended, thy ignoble garb
Conceal'd a spirit, which I now revere.

Thy

Thy countenance demands a better lot,
Than I, a stranger to thy hidden worth, 185
Unconscious offer'd. Freedom dwells in Greece,
Humanity and justice. Thou shalt see
Leonidas their guardian. To the king
He leads him straight, presents him in these words.

IN mind superior to the base attire, 190
Which marks his limbs with shame, a stranger
comes,
Who thy protection claims. The slave subjoins.

I STAND thy suppliant now. Thou soon shalt
learn,
If I deserve thy favor. I request
To meet th' assembled chieftains of this host. 195
Oh ! I am fraught with tidings, which import
The weal of ev'ry Grecian. Agis swift,

Appointed

Appointed by Leonidas, convenes
The diff'rent leaders. To the tent they speed.
Before them call'd, the stranger thus began. 200

O ALPHEUS ! Maron ! Hither turn your sight,
And know your brother. From their seats they
start.

From either breaks in ecstasy the name
Of Polydorus. To his dear embrace
Each fondly strives to rush ; but he withstands : 205
While down his cheek a flood of anguish pours
From his dejected eyes, in torture bent
On that vile garb, dishonoring his form.
At length these accents, intermix'd with groans,
A passage found, while mute attention gaz'd. 210

You first should know, if this unhappy slave
Yet merits your embraces. Then approach'd

Leonidas. Before him all recede,
Ev'n Alpheus' self, and yields his brother's hand,
Which in his own the regal hero press'd. 215
Still Polydorus on his gloomy front
Repugnance stern to consolation bore ;
When thus the king with majesty benign,

Lo ! ev'ry heart is open to thy worth.
Injurious fortune, and enfeebling time 220
By servitude and grief severely try
A lib'r'al spirit. Try'd, but not subdu'd,
Do thou appear. Whatever be our lot
Is heav'n's appointment. Patience best becomes
The citizen and soldier. Let the fight 225
Of friends and brethren dissipate thy gloom.

Of men the gentlest, Agis too advanc'd,
Who with increas'd humanity began.

Now

Now in thy native liberty secure,
Smile on thy pass'd affliction, and relate, 230
What chance restores thy merit to the arms
Of friends and kindred. Polydorus then.

I WAS a Spartan. When my tender prime
On manhood border'd, from Laconia's shores
Snatch'd by Phœnician pirates, I was sold 235
A slave, by Hyperanthes bought and giv'n
To Ariana. Gracious was her hand.
But I remain'd a bondman, still estrang'd
From Lacedæmon. Demaratus oft
In friendly sorrow would my lot deplore ; 240
Nor less his own ill-fated virtue mourn'd,
Lost to his country in a servile court,
The center of corruption ; where in smiles
Are painted envy, treachery and hate
With rankling malice ; where alone sincere 245

The dissolute seek no disguise : where those,
Possessing all, a monarch can bestow,
Are far less happy, than the meanest heir
To freedom, far more groveling, than the slave,
Who serves their cruel pride. Yet here the sun 250
Ten times his yearly circle hath renew'd,
Since Polydorus hath in bondage groan'd.
My bloom is pass'd, or, pining in despair,
Untimely wither'd. I at last return
A messenger of fate, who tidings bear 255
Of desolation. Here he paus'd in grief
Redoubled ; when Leonidas. Proceed.
Should from thy lips inevitable death
To all be threaten'd, thou art heard by none,
Whose dauntless hearts can entertain a thought, 260
But how to fall the noblest. Thus the king.
The rest in speechless expectation wait.
Such was the solemn silence, which o'erspread

The

The shrine of Ammon, or Dodona's shades,
When anxious mortals from the mouth of Jove
Their doom explor'd. Nor Polydorus long 265
Suspends the counsel, but resumes his tale.

As I this night accompany'd the steps
Of Ariana, near the pass we saw
A restless form, now traversing the way,
Now, as a statue, rivetted by doubt, 270
Then on a sudden starting to renew
An eager pace. As nearer we approach'd,
He by the moon, which glimmer'd on our heads,
Descry'd us. Straight advancing, whither bent
Our midnight course, he ask'd. I knew the voice
Of Demaratus. To my breast I clasp'd 276
The venerable exile, and reply'd.
Laconia's camp we seek. Demand no more.
Farewel. He wept. Be heav'n thy guide, he said,

Thrice happy Polydorus. Thou again 280

Mayst visit Sparta, to these eyes deny'd.

Soon as arriv'd at those triumphant tents,

Say to the Spartans from their exil'd king,

Although their blind credulity depriv'd

The wretched Demaratus of his home ; 285

From ev'ry joy secluded, from his wife,

His offspring torn, his countrymen and friends,

Him from his virtue they could ne'er divide.

Say, that ev'n here, where all are kings, or slaves,

Amid the riot of flagitious courts 290

Not quite extinct his Spartan spirit glows,

Though grief hath dimm'd its fires. Rememb'ring

this,

Report, that newly to the Persian host

Return'd a Malian, Epialtes nam'd,

Who, as a spy, the Grecian tents had sought. 295

He to the monarch magnify'd his art,

Which

Book IX. L E O N I D A S. 101

Which by delusive eloquence had wrought
The Greeks to such despair ; that ev'ry band
To Persia's sov'reign standard would have bow'd ;
Had not the spirit of a single chief, 300
By fear unconquer'd, and on death resolv'd,
Restor'd their valour : therefore would the king
Trust to his guidance a selected force,
They soon should pierce th' unguarded bounds of
Greece.

Through a neglected aperture above, 305
Where no Leonidas should bar their way :
Meantime by him the trech'rous Thebans sent
Assurance of their aid. Th' assenting prince
At once decreed two myriads to advance
With Hyperanthes. Ev'ry lord besides, 310
Whom youth, or courage, or ambition warm,
Rous'd by the traitor's eloquence, attend
From all the nations with a rival zeal

To enter Greece the foremost. In a sigh
He clos'd—like me. Tremendous from his seat 315
Uprose Diomedon. His eyes were flames.
When swift on trembling Anaxander broke
These ireful accents from his livid lips.

YET ere we fall, O traitor, shall this arm
To hell's avenging furies sink thy head. 320

ALL now is tumult. Ev'ry bosom swells
With wrath untam'd and vengeance. Half un-
sheath'd,
Th' impetuous falchion of Platæa flames.
But, as the Colchian sorceress, renown'd
In legends old, or Circé, when they fram'd 325
A potent spel, to smoothness charm'd the main,
And lull'd Æolian rage by mystic song ;
Till not a billow heav'd against the shore,

Nor

Nor ev'n the wanton-winged zephyr breath'd
The lightest whisper through the magic air : 330
So, when thy voice, Leonidas, is heard,
Confusion listens ; ire in silent aw
Subsides. Withhold this rashness, cries the king.
To proof of guilt let punishment succeed.
Not yet Barbarian shouts our camp alarm. 335
We still have time for vengeance, time to know,
If menac'd ruin we may yet repel,
Or how most glorious perish. Next arose
Dionece, and thus th' experienc'd man.

ERE they surmount our fences, Xerxes' troops
Must learn to conquer, and the Greeks to fly. 341
The spears of Phocis guard that secret pass.
To them let instant messengers depart,
And note the hostile progress. Alpheus here.

LEONIDAS, behold, my willing feet 345

Shall to the Phocians bear thy high commands ;

Shall climb the hill to watch th' approaching foe.

THOU active son of valour, quick returns

The chief of Lacedæmon, in my thoughts

For ever present, when the public weal 350

Requires the swift, the vigilant and bold.

Go, climb, surmount the rock's aerial height.

Observe the hostile march. A Spartan band,

Dionece, provide. Thyself conduct

Their speedy succour to our Phocian friends. 355

THE council rises. For his course prepar'd,

While day, declining, prompts his eager feet,

O Polydorus, Alpheus thus in haste,

Long lost, and late-recover'd, we must part

Again, perhaps for ever. Thou return 360

To kiss the sacred soil, which gave thee birth,
And calls thee back to freedom. Brother dear,
I should have sighs to give thee—but farewell.
My country chides me, loit'ring in thy arms.

THIS said, he darts along, nor looks behind, 365
When Polydorus answers. Alpheus, no.
I have the marks of bondage to erase.
My blood must wash the shameful stain away.

WE have a father, Maron interpos'd.
Thy unexpected presence will revive
His heavy age, now childless and forlorn. 370

To him the brother with a gloomy frown.
Ill should I comfort others. View these eyes.
Faint is their light; and vanish'd was my bloom.
Before its hour of ripeness. In my breast

Grief will retain a mansion, nor by time 375
Be disposess'd. Unceasing shall my soul
Brood o'er the black remembrance of my youth,
In slavery exhausted. Life to me
Hath lost its favour. Then in sullen woe
His head declines. His brother pleads in vain. 380

Now in his view Dieneces appear'd
With Sparta's band. Immoveable his eyes
On them he fix'd, revolving these dark thoughts.

I too like them from Lacedæmon spring,
Like them instructed once to poise the spear, 385
To lift the pond'rous shield. Ill-destin'd wretch !
Thy arm is grown enervate, and would sink
Beneath a buckler's weight. Malignant fates !
Who have compell'd my free-born hand to change
The warrior's arms for ignominious bonds ; 390
Would

Would you compensate for my chains, my shame,
My ten years anguish, and the fell despair,
Which on my youth have prey'd ; relenting once,
Grant, I may bear my buckler to the field,
And, known a Spartan, seek the shades below. 395

WHY to be known a Spartan must thou seek
The shades below ? Impatient Maron spake.
Live, and be known a Spartan by thy deeds.
Live, and enjoy thy dignity of birth.
Live and perform the duties, which become 400
A citizen of Sparta. Still thy brow.
Frowns gloomy, still unyielding. He, who leads
Our band, all fathers of a noble race,
Will ne'er permit thy barren day to close
Without an offspring to uphold the state. 405,

He will, replies the brother in a glow,

Prevailing.

Prevailing o'er the paleness of his cheek,
He will permit me to compleat by death
The measure of my duty ; will permit
Me to achieve a service, which no hand
But mine can render, to adorn his fall
With double lustre, strike the barb'rous foe
With endless terror, and avenge the shame
Of an enslav'd Laconian. Closing here
His words mysterious, quick he turn'd away
To find the tent of Agis. There his hand
In grateful sorrow minister'd her aid ;
While the humane, the hospitable care
Of Agis gently by her lover's corse
On one sad bier the pallid beauties laid.
Of Ariana. He from bondage freed
Four eastern captives, whom his gen'rous arm
That day had spar'd in battle ; then began.

This.

This solemn charge. You, Persians, whom my

fword

Acquir'd in war, unransom'd, shall depart.

425

To you I render freedom, which you sought

To wrest from me. One recompence I ask,

And one alone. Transport to Asia's camp

This bleeding princess. Bid the Persian king

Weep o'er this flow'r, untimely cut in bloom. 430

Then say, th' all-judging pow'rs have thus ordain'd.

Thou, whose ambition o'er the groaning earth

Leads desolation ; o'er the nations spreads

Calamity and tears ; thou first shalt mourn,

And through thy house destruction first shall range.

DISMISS'D, they gain the rampart, where on

guard

Was Dithyrambus posted. He perceiv'd

The mournful bier approach. To him the fate

Of

Of Ariana was already told.

He met the captives, with a moisten'd eye, 440

Full bent on Teribazus, sigh'd and spake.

O THAT, assuming with those Grecian arms
A Grecian spirit, thou in scorn hadst look'd
On princes ! Worth like thine, from slavish courts
Withdrawn, had ne'er been wasted to support 445
A king's injustice. Then a gentler lot
Had bleis'd thy life, or, dying, thou hadst known,
How sweet is death for liberty. A Greek
Affords these friendly wishes, though his head
Had lost the honors, gather'd from thy fall, 450
When fortune favor'd, or propitious Jove
Smil'd on the better cause. Ill-fated pair,
Whom in compassion's purest dew I lave,
But that my hand infix'd the deathful wound,
And must be grievous to your loathing shades, 455

From

Book IX. LEONIDAS. 111

From all the neighb'ring valleys would I cull
Their fairest growth to strew your hearse with
flow'rs.

Yet, O accept these tears and pious pray'rs !
May peace furround your ashes ! May your shades
Pass o'er the silent pool to happier seats ! 460

HE ceas'd in tears. The captives leave the wall,
And slowly down Thermopylæ proceed.

The END of the Ninth Book.



LEONI-

LEONIDAS.

BOOK the TENTH.

The Argument.

Medon convenes the Locrian commanders, and harangues them; repairs at midnight to his sister Melissa in the temple, and receives from her the first intelligence, that the Persians were in actual possession of the upper Streights, which had been abandoned by the Phocians. Melibæus brings her tidings of her father's death. She strictly enjoins her brother to preserve his life by a timely retreat, and recommends the enforcement of her advice to the prudence and zeal of Melibæus. In the morning the bodies of Teribazus and Ariana are brought into the presence of Xerxes, soon after a report had reached the camp, that great part of his navy was shipwrecked. The Persian monarch, quite dispirited, is persuaded by Argestes to send an ambassador to the Spartan king. Argestes himself is deputed, who, after revealing his embassy in secret to Leonidas, is by him

led before the whole army, and there receives his answer. Alpheus returns, and declares, that the enemy was master of the passages in the hills, and would arrive at Thermopylæ the next morning ; upon which Leonidas offers to send away all the troops except his three hundred Spartans ; but Diomedon, Demophilus, Dithyrambus and Megistias refuse to depart : then to relieve the perplexity of Medon on this occasion, he transfers to him the supreme command, dismisses Argestes, orders the companions of his own fate to be ready in arms by sunset, and retires to his pavilion.

TH E Grecian leaders, from the counsel ris'n,
Among the troops dispersing, by their
words,

Their looks undaunted warm the coldest heart
Against new dangers threat'ning. To his tent
The Locrian captains Medon swift convenes, 5
Exhorting thus. O long-approv'd my friends,
You, who have seen my father in the field
Triumphant, bold assistants of my arm

In

In labours not inglorious, who this day
Have rais'd fresh trophies, be prepar'd. If help 10
Be further wanted in the Phocian camp,
You will the next be summon'd. Locris lies
To ravage first expos'd. Your ancient fane,
Your goddesses, your priestess half-ador'd,
The daughter of Oileus, from your swords 15
Protection claim against an impious foe.

ALL anxious for Melissa, he dismiss'd
Th' applauding vet'rans; to the sacred cave
Then hasten'd. Under heav'n's night-shaded cope
He mus'd. Melissa in her holy place 20
How to approach with inauspicious steps,
How to accost his penfive mind revolv'd :
When Mycon, pious vassal of the fane,
Descending through the cavern, at the sight
Of Medon stopp'd, and thus. Thy presence, lord,
The

The priestess calls. To Lacedæmon's king 26

I bear a message, suff'ring no delay.

HE quits the chief, whose rapid feet ascend,
Soon ent'ring, where the pedestal displays

Thy form, Calliopè sublime. The lyre, 30

Whose accents immortality confer,

Thy fingers seem to wake. On either side,

The snowy gloss of Parian marble shews

Four of thy sisters through surrounding shade.

Before each image is a virgin plac'd. 35

Before each virgin dimly burns a lamp,

Whose livid spires just temper with a gleam

The dead obscurity of night. Apart

The priestess thoughtful sits. Thus Medon breaks

The solemn silence. Anxious for thy state 40

Without a summons to thy pure abode

I was approaching. Deities, who know

The

The present, pass'd and future, let my lips,
Unblam'd, have utt'rance. Thou, my sister, hear.
Thy breast let wisdom strengthen. Impious foes
Through Oeta now are passing. She replies. 46

ARE passing, brother ! They alas ! are pass'd,
Are in possession of the upper Streight.
Hear in thy turn. A dire narration hear.
A favor'd goat, conductor of my herd, 50
Stray'd to a dale, whose outlet is the post
To Phocians left, and penetrates to Greece.
Him Mycon following, by a hostile band,
Light-arm'd forerunners of a num'rous host,
Was seiz'd. By fear of menac'd torments forc'd,
He shew'd a passage up that mountain's side, 56
Whose length of wood o'ershades the Phocian land.
To dry and sapless trunks in diff'rent parts
Fire, by the Persians artfully apply'd,

Soon

Soon grew to flames. This done, the troop return'd,

60

Detaining Mycon. Now the mountain blaz'd.

The Phocians, ill-commanded, left their post,

Alarm'd, confus'd. More distant ground they chose.

In blind delusion forming there, they spread

Their ineffectual banners to repel

65

Imagin'd peril from those fraudulent lights,

By stratagem prepar'd. A real foe

Meantime secur'd the undefended pass.

This Mycon saw. Escaping thence to me,

He by my orders hastens to inform

70

Leonidas. She paus'd. Like one, who sees

The forked light'ning into shivers rive

A knotted oak, or crumble tow'r's to dust,

Aghast was Medon ; then, recov'ring, spake.

THOU boasted glory of th' Oilean house,

75

If

If e'er thy brother bow'd in rev'rence due
To thy superior virtues, let his voice
Be now regarded. From th' endanger'd fane,
My sister, fly. Whatever be my lot,
A troop select of Locrians shall transport 80
Thy sacred person, where thy will ordains.

THINK not of me, returns the dame. To
Greece

Direct thy zeal. My peasants are conven'd,
That by their labour, when the fatal hour
Requires, with massy fragments I may bar 85
That cave to human entrance. Best belov'd
Of brothers, now a serious ear incline.
Awhile in Greece to fortune's wanton gale
His golden banner shall the Persian king,
Deluded, wave. Leonidas, by death 90
Preserving Sparta, will his spirit leave

To

To blast the glitt'ring pageant. Medon, live
To share that glory. Thee to perish here
No law, no oracle enjoins. To die,

Uncall'd, is blameful. Let thy pious hand 95
Secure Oileus from Barbarian force.

To Sparta mindful of her noble host
Entrust his rev'rend head. Th' assembled hinds,
Youths, maidens, wives with nurselings at their
breasts,

Around her now in consternation stood, 100
The women weeping, mute, aghast the men.

To them she turns. You never, faithful race,
Your priestess shall forsake. Melissa here,
Despairing never of the public weal,

For better days in solitude shall wait, 105
Shall cheer your sadness. My prophetic soul

Sees through time's cloud the liberty of Greece
More stable, more effulgent. In his blood

Leonidas cements th' unshaken base
Of that strong tow'r, which Athens shall exalt 110
To cast a shadow o'er the eastern world.

THIS utter'd, tow'rd the temple's inmost seat
Of sanctity her solemn step she bends,
Devout, enraptur'd. In their dark'ning lamps
The pallid flames are fainting. Dim through mists
The morning peeps. An awful silence reigns. 116
While Medon pensive from the fane descends,
But instant reappears. Behind him close
Treads Melibœus, through the cavern's mouth
Ascending pale in aspect, not unlike 120
What legends tell of spectres, by the force
Of necromantic sorcery constrain'd ;
Through earths dark bowels, which the spell dis-
join'd,
They from death's mansion in reluctant sloth

Rose

Rose to divulge the secrets of their graves, 125
Or mysteries of fate. His cheerful brow,
O'erclouded, palely on his healthful cheek,
A dull, unwonted heaviness of pace
Portend disast'rous tidings. Medon spake.

TURN, holy sister. By the gods belov'd, 130
May they sustain thee in this mournful hour.
Our father, good Oileus is no more.
Rehearse thy tidings, swain. He takes the word.

THOU wast not present, when his mind, out-
stretch'd
By zeal for Greece, transported by his joy 135
To entertain Leonidas, refus'd
Due rest. Old age his ardour had forgot,
To his last waking moment with his guest
In rapt'rous talk redundant. He at last,

Compos'd and smiling in th' embrace of sleep, 140
To Pan's protection at the island fane
Was left. He wak'd no more. The fatal news,
To you discover'd, from the chiefs I hide.

MELISSA heard, inclin'd her forehead low
Before th' insculptur'd deities. A sigh 145
Broke from her heart, these accents from her lips.

THE full of days and honors through the gate
Of painless slumber is retir'd. His tomb
Shall stand among his fathers in the shade
Of his own trophies. Placid were his days, 150
Which flow'd through blessings. As a river pure,
Whose sides are flow'ry, and whose meadows fair,
Meets in his course a subterranean void ;
There dips his silver head, again to rise,

And,

And, rising, glide through flow'rs and meadows

new :

155

So shall Oileus in those happier fields,

Where never tempests roar, nor humid clouds

In mists dissolve, nor white-descending flakes

Of winter violate th' eternal green ;

Where never gloom of trouble shades the mind, 160

Nor gust of passion heaves the quiet breast,

Nor dews of grief are sprinkled. Thou art gone,

Host of divine Leonidas on earth,

Art gone before him to prepare the feast,

Immortalizing virtue. Silent here, 165

Around her head she wraps her hallow'd pall.

Her prudent virgins interpose a hymn,

Not in a plaintive, but majestic flow,

To which their fingers, sweeping o'er the chords,

The lyre's full tone attemper. She unveils, 170

Then with a voice, a countenance compos'd.

G 2

Ge,

Go, Medon, pillar of th' Oilean house.
New cares, new duties claim thy precious life.
Perform the pious obsequies. Let tears,
Let groans be absent from the sacred dust, 175
Which heav'n in life so favor'd, more in death.
A term of righteous days, an envy'd urn
Like his, for Medon is Melissa's pray'r.
Thou, Melibœus, cordial, high in rank
Among the prudent, warn and watch thy lord. 180
My benediction shall reward thy zeal.

SOOTH'D by the blessings of such perfect lips,
They both depart. And now the climbing sun
To Xerxes' tent discover'd from afar
The Persian captives with their mournful load. 185
Before them rumour through her sable trump
Breathes lamentation. Horror lends his voice
To spread the tidings of disastrous fate

Along

Along Spercheos. As a vapour black,
Which, from the distant, horizontal verge 190
Ascending, nearer still and nearer bends
To higher lands its progress, there condens'd,
Throws darkness o'er the valleys, while the face
Of nature saddens round ; so step by step,
In motion flow th' advancing bier diffus'd 195
A solemn sadness o'er the camp. A hedge
Of trembling spears on either hand is form'd.
Tears underneath his iron-pointed cone
The Sacian drops. The Caspian savage feels
His heart transpierc'd, and wonders at the pain. 200
In Xerxes' presence are the bodies plac'd,
Nor he forbids. His agitated breast
All night had weigh'd against his future hopes
His present losses, his defeated ranks,
By myriads thinn'd, their multitude abash'd, 205
His fleet thrice-worsted, torn by storms, reduc'd

To half its number. When he slept, in dreams
He saw the haggard dead, which floated round
Th' adjoining strands. Disasters new their ghosts
In sullen frowns, in shrill upbraiding bode. 210
Thus, ere the gory bier approach'd his eyes,
He in dejection had already lost
His kingly pride, the parent of disdain,
And cold indifference to human woes.
Not ev'n beside his sister's nobler corse 215
Her humble lover could awake his scorn.
The captives told their piercing tale. He heard;
He felt awhile compassion. But ere long
Those traces vanish'd from the tyrant's breast.
His former gloom redoubles. For himself 220
His anxious bosom heaves, oppres'd by fear,
Lest he with all his splendour should be cast
A prey to fortune. Thoughtful near the throne
Laconia's exile waits, to whom the king.

O DE-

O DEMARATUS, what will fate ordain ! 225

Lo ! fortune turns against me. What shall check
Her further malice, when her daring stride
Invades my house with ravage, and profanes
The blood of great Darius. I have sent

From my unguarded side the chosen band, 230

My bravest chiefs to pass the desert hill ;

Have to the conduct of a Malian spy

My hopes entrusted. May not there the Greeks

In opposition more tremendous still,

More ruinous, than yester sun beheld, 235

Maintain their post invincible, renew

Their stony thunder in augmented rage,

And send whole quarries down the craggy steeps

Again to crush my army ? Oh ! unfold

Thy secret thoughts, nor hide the harshest truth.

Say, what remains to hope ? The exile here. 241

Too well, O monarch, do thy fears presage,
What may betal thy army. If the Greeks,
Arrang'd within Thermopylæ, a pass
Accessible and practic'd, could repel 245
With such destruction their unnumber'd foes ;
What scenes of havoc may untrodden paths,
Confin'd among the craggy hills, afford ?

Lost in despair, the monarch silent sat. 250
Not less unmann'd, than Xerxes, from his place
Uprose Argestes ; but concealing fear,
These artful words deliver'd. If the king
Propitious wills to spare his faithful bands,
Nor spread at large the terrors of his pow'r ; 255
More gentle means of conquest, than by arms,
Nor less secure may artifice supply.
Renown'd Darius, thy immortal fire
Bright in the spoil of kingdoms, long in vain

Ths

The fields of proud Euphrates with his host 260

O'erspread. At length, confiding in the wiles

Of Zopyrus, the mighty prince subdu'd

The Babylonian ramparts. Who shall count

The thrones and states, by stratagem o'erturn'd ?

But if corruption join her pow'rful aid, 265

Not one can stand. What race of men possess

That probity, that wisdom, which the veil

Of craft shall never blind, nor proffer'd wealth,

Nor splendid pow'r seduce ? O Xerxes, born

To more, than mortal greatness, canst thou find 270

Through thy unbounded sway no dazzling gift,

Which may allure Leonidas ? Dispel

The cloud of sadness from those sacred eyes.

Great monarch, proffer to Laconia's chief,

What may thy own magnificence declare, 175

And win his friendship. O'er his native Greece

Invest him sov'reign. Thus procure his sword

For thy succeeding conquests. Xerxes here,
As from a trance awak'ning, swift replies.

WISE are thy dictates. Fly to Sparta's chief. 280
Argestes, fall before him. Bid him join
My arms, and reign o'er ev'ry Grecian state.

HE scarce had finish'd, when in haste approach'd
Artuchus. Startled at the ghastly stage
Of death, that guardian of the Persian fair. 285
Thus in a groan. Thou deity malign,
O Arimanus, what a bitter draught
For my sad lips thy cruelty hath mix'd !
Is this the flow'r of women, to my charge
So lately giv'n ? Oh ! princes, I have rang'd 290
The whole Sperchean valley, woods and caves,
In quest of thee, found here a lifeless corse.
Astonishment and horror lock my tongue.

PRIDE

PRIDE now, reviving in the monarch's breast,
Dispell'd his black despondency awhile, 295
With gall more black effacing from his heart:
Each merciful impression. Stern he spake.

REMOVE her, satrap, to the female train.
Let them the due solemnities perform.
But never she, by Mithra's light I swear, 300
Shall sleep in Susa with her kindred dust;
Who by ignoble passions hath debas'd
The blood of Xerxes. Greece beheld her shame;
Let Greece behold her tomb. The low-born slave,
Who dar'd to Xerxes' sister lift his hopes, 305
On some bare crag expose. The Spartan here.

MY royal patron, let me speak—and die,
If such thy will. This cold, disfigur'd clay
Was late thy soldier, gallantly who fought,

Wh-

Who nobly perish'd, long the dearest friend 310
Of Hyperanthes, hazarding his life
Now in thy cause. O'er Persians thou dost reign ;
None more, than Persians, venerate the brave.

WELL hath he spoke, Atruchus firm subjoins.
But if the king his rigour will inflict 315
On this dead warrior—Heav'n, o'erlook the deed,
Nor on our heads accumulate fresh woes !
The shatter'd fleet, th' intimidated camp,
The band select, through Oeta's dang'rous wilds
At this dread crisis struggling, must obtain 320
Support from heav'n, or Asia's glory falls.

FELL pride, recoiling at these awful words.
In Xerxes' frozen bosom, yields to fear,
Resuming there the sway. He grants the corse.

To

To Demaratus. Forth Artuchus moves 325

Behind the bier, uplifted by his train.

ARGESTES, parted from his master's side,
Ascends a car ; and, speeding o'er the beach,
Sees Artemisia. She the ashes pale
Of slaughter'd Carians, on the pyre consum'd, 330

Was then collecting for the fun'r'l vase

In exclamation thus. My subjects, lost
On earth, descend to happier climes below—

The fawning, dastard counsellors, who left

Your worth deserted in the hour of need; 335

May kites disfigure, may the wolf devour—

Shade of my husband, thou salute in smiles

These gallant warriors, faithful once to thee,

Nor less to me. They tidings will report

Of Artemisia to revive thy love— 340

May wretches like Argestes never clasp-

Their

Their wives, their offspring ! Never greet their
homes !

May their unbury'd limbs dismiss their ghosts.
To wail for ever on the banks of Styx !

THEN, turning tow'r'd her son. Come, virtuous
boy.

345

Let us transport these reliques of our friends
To yon tall bark, in pendent fable clad.
They, if her keel be destin'd to return,
Shall in paternal monuments repose.

Let us embark. Till Xerxes shuts his ear.

350

To false Argestes ; in her vessel hid,
Shall Artemisia's gratitude lament
Her bounteous sov'reign's fate. Leander, mark:
The Doric virtues are not eastern plants.

Them foster still within thy gen'rous breast ;

355

But keep in covert from the blaze of courts ;

Where:

Where flatt'ry's guile in oily words profuse,
In action tardy, o'er th' ingenuous tongue,
The arm of valour, and the faithful heart
Will ever triumph. Yet my foul enjoys
Her own presage, that destiny reserves

360

An hour for my revenge. Concluding here,
She gains the fleet. Argestes sweeps along
On rapid wheels from Artemisia's view,
Like Night, protectress foul of heinous deeds,
With treason, rape and murder at her heel, 365.
Before the eye of morn retreating swift
To hide her loathsome visage. Soon he reach'd
Thermopylæ; descending from his car,
Was led by Dithyrambus to the tent
Of Sparta's ruler. Since the fatal news. 370
By Mycon late deliver'd, he apart
With Polydorus had consulted long
On high attempts; and, now sequester'd, sat

To ruminate on vengeance. At his feet

Prone fell the satrap, and began. The will

375

Of Xerxes bends me prostrate to the earth

Before thy presence. Great and matchless chief,

Thus says the lord of Asia. Join my arms;

Thy recompense is Greece. Her fruitful plains,

Her gen'rous steeds, her flocks, her num'rous

towns,

380

Her sons I render to thy sov'reign hand.

And, O illustrious warrior, heed my words.

Think on the bliss of royalty, the pomp

Of courts, their endless pleasures, trains of slaves,

Who restless watch for thee, and thy delights:

385

Think on the glories of unrivall'd sway.

Look on th' Ionic, on th' Æolian Greeks.

From them their phantom liberty is flown;

While in each province, rais'd by Xerxes' pow'r,

Some favor'd chief presides; exalted state,

390

Ne'er

Ne'er giv'n by envious freedom. On his head
He bears the gorgeous diadem ; he sees
His equals once in adoration stoop
Beneath his footstool. What superior beams
Will from thy temples blaze, when gen'ral Greece,
In noblest states abounding, calls thee lord, 396
Thee only worthy. How will each rejoice
Around thy throne, and hail th' auspicious day,]
When thou, distinguish'd by the Persian king,
Didst in thy sway consenting nations bless, 400
Didst calm the fury of unsparing war,
Which else had delug'd all with blood and flames.

LEONIDAS replies not, but commands
The Thespian youth, still watchful near the tent,
To summon all the Grecians. He obeys. 405
The king uprises from his seat, and bids
The Persian follow. He, amaz'd, attends,

Surrounded soon by each assembling band ;
When thus at length the godlike Spartan spake.

HERE, Persian, tell thy embassy. Repeat, 410
That to obtain my friendship Asia's prince
To me hath proffer'd sov'reignty o'er Greece.
Then view these bands, whose valour shall preserve
That Greece unconquer'd, which your king be-
fows ;

Shall strew your bodies on her crimson'd plains : 415
The indignation, painted on their looks,
Their gen'rous scorn may answer for their chief.
Yet from Leonidas, thou wretch, inur'd
To vassalage and baseness, hear. The pomp,
The arts of pleasure in despotic courts 420
I spurn abhorrent. In a spotless heart
I look for pleasure. I from righteous deeds
Derive my splendour. No adoring croud,

No purpled slaves, no mercenary spears
My state embarrass. I in Sparta rule 425
By laws, my rulers, with a guard unknown
To Xerxes, public confidence and love.
No pale suspicion of th' empoison'd bowl,
Th' assassin's poniard, or provok'd revolt
Chace from my decent couch the peace, deny'd 430
To his resplendent canopy. Thy king,
Who hath profan'd by proffer'd bribes my ear,
Dares not to meet my arm. Thee, trembling
slave,
Whose embassy was treason, I despise,
And therefore spare. Diomedon subjoins. 435

OUR marble temples these Barbarians waste,
A crime less impious, than a bare attempt
Of sacrilege on virtue. Grant my suit,
Thou living temple, where the goddess dwells.

To

To me consign the caitiff. Soon the winds 440
Shall parch his limbs on Oeta's tallest pine.

AMIDST his fury suddenly return'd
The speed of Alpheus. All, suspended, fix'd
On him their eyes impatient. He began.

I AM return'd a messenger of ill. 445
Close to the passage, op'ning into Greece,
That post committed to the Phocian guard,
O'erhangs a bushy cliff. A station there
Behind the shrubs by dead of night I took,
Though not in darkness. Purple was the face 450
Of heav'n. Beneath my feet the valleys glow'd.
A range immense of wood-invested hills,
The boundaries of Greece, were clad in flames;
An act of froward chance, or crafty foes
To cast dismay. The crackling pines I heard; 455

Their

Their branches sparkled, and the thickets blaz'd.

In hillocks embers rose. Embody'd fire,

As from unnumber'd furnaces, I saw

Mount high through vacant trunks of headless oaks,

Broad-bas'd, and dry with age. Barbarian helms,

Shields, javelins, sabres, gleaming from below,

Full soon discover'd to my tortur'd sight

The streights in Persia's pow'r. The Phocian chief,

Whate'er the cause, relinquishing his post,

Was to a neighb'ring eminence remov'd;

There, by the foe neglected, or contemn'd,

Remain'd in arms, and neither fled, nor fought.

I stay'd for day spring. Then the Persian mov'd.

To-morrow's sun will see their numbers here.

He said no more. Unutterable fear

470

In

In horrid silence wraps the lift'ning croud, 475

Aghast, confounded. Silent are the chiefs,

Who feel no terror ; yet in wonder fix'd,

Thick-wedg'd, inclose Leonidas around,

Who thus in calmest elocution spake.

I now behold the oracle fulfill'd. 480

Then art thou near, thou glorious, sacred hour,

Which shalt my country's liberty secure.

Thrice hail ! thou solemn period. Thee the

tongues

Of virtue, fame and freedom shall proclaim,

Shall celebrate in ages yet unborn. 485

Thou godlike offspring of a godlike sire,

To him my kindest greetings, Medon, bear.

Farewel, Megistias, holy friend and brave.

Thou too, experienc'd, venerable chief,

Demophilus, farewell. Farwel to thee, 490

Invin-

Invincible Diomedon, to thee,
Unequall'd Dithyrambus, and to all,
Ye other dauntless warriors, who may claim
Praise from my lips, and friendship from my heart.

You after all the wonders, which your swords 495

Have here accomplish'd, will enrich your names
By fresh renown. Your valour must compleat,
What ours begins. Here first th' astonish'd foe
On dying Spartans shall with terror gaze,
And tremble, while he conquers. Then, by fate
Led from his dreadful victory to meet 501
United Greece in phalanx o'er the plain,
By your avenging spears himself shall fall.

FORTH from the assembly strides Platæa's chief.
By the twelve gods, enthron'd in heav'n supreme ;
By my fair name, unsully'd yet, I swear, 505
Thine eye, Leonidas, shall ne'er behold
Diomedon forsake thee. First let strength

Desert

Desert my limbs, and fortitude my heart.
 Did I not face the Marathonian war ?
 Have I not seen the Thermopylæ ? What more 510
 Can fame bestow, which I should wait to share ?
 Where can I, living, purchase brighter praise,
 Than dying here ? What more illustrious tomb
 Can I obtain, than, bury'd in the heaps
 Of Persians, fall'n my victims, on this rock 515
 To lie distinguish'd by a thousand wounds ?

He ended ; when Demophilus. O king
 Of Lacedæmon, pride of human race,
 Whom none e'er equall'd, but the seed of Jove, 520
 Thy own forefather, number'd with the gods,
 Lo ! I am old. With faltering steps I tread
 The prone descent of years. My country claim'd
 My youth, my ripeness. Feeble age but yields
 An empty name of service. What remains 525

For me unequal to the winged speed
Of active hours, which court the swift and young?
What eligible wish can wisdom form,
But to die well? Demophilus shall close
With thee, O hero, on this glorious earth 530
His eve of life. The youth of Thespia next
Address'd Leonidas. O first of Greeks,
Me too think worthy to attend thy fame
With this most dear, this venerable man,
Forever honor'd from my tend'rest age, 537
Ev'n till on life's extremity we part.
Nor too aspiring let my hopes be deem'd;
Should the Barbarian in his triumph mark
My youthful limbs among the gory heaps,
Perhaps remembrance may unnerve his arm 540
In future fields of contest with a race,
To whom the flow'r, the blooming joys of life
Are less alluring, than a noble death.

To him his second parent. Wilt thou bleed,
My Dithyrambus? But I here withhold 545
All counsel from thee, who art wise, as brave.
I know thy magnanimity. I read
Thy gen'rous thoughts. Decided is thy choice.
Come then, attendants on a godlike shade,
When to th' Elysian ancestry of Greece 550
Descends her great protector, we will shew
To Harmatides an illustrious son,
A no unworthy brother. We will link
Our shields together. We will press the ground,
Still undivided in the arms of death. 555
So if th' attentive traveller we draw
To our cold reliques, wond'ring, shall he trace
The diff'rent scene, then pregnant with applause,
O wise old man, exclaim, the hour of fate
Well didst thou chuse; and, O unequall'd youth,
Who for thy country didst thy bloom devote, 361
May'st

May'st thou remain forever dear to fame !
May time rejoice to name thee ! O'er thy urn
May everlasting peace her pinion spread.

THIS said, the hero with his lifted shield 565
His face o'ershades ; he drops a secret tear :
Not this a tear of anguish, but deriv'd
From fond affection, grown mature with time,
Awak'd a manly tenderness alone,
Unmix'd with pity, or with vain regret. PUB 370

A STREAM of duty, gratitude and love
Flow'd from the heart of Harmatides' son,
Addressing straight Leonidas, whose looks
Declar'd unspeakable applause. O king
Of Lacedæmon, now distribute praise 575
From thy accustom'd justice, small to me,
To him a portion large. His guardian care,

His kind instruction, his example train'd
My infancy, my youth. From him I learn'd
To live, unspotted. Could I less, than learn 580
From him to die with honor. Medon hears.
Shook by a whirlwind of contending thoughts
Strong heaves his manly bosom, under aw
Of wise Melissa, torn by friendship, fir'd
By such example high. In dubious state 585
So rolls a vessel, when th' inflated waves
Her planks assail, and winds her canvas rend ;
The rudder labours, and requires a hand
Of firm, delib'rate skill. The gen'rous king
Perceive's the hero's struggle, and prepares 590
To interpose relief ; when instant came
Dieneces before them. Short he spake.

BARBARIAN myriads through the secret pass
Have enter'd Greece. Leonidas, by morn

Expect

Expect them here. My slender force I spar'd. 595
There to have died was useless. We return
With thee to perish. Union of our strength
Will render more illustrious to ourselves,
And to the foe more terrible our fall.

MEGISTIAS last accosts Laconia's king. 600
Thou, whom the gods have chosen to exalt
Above mankind in virtue and renown,
O call not me presumptuous, who implore
Among these heroes thy regardful ear.
To Lacedæmon I a stranger came, 605
There found protection. There to honors rais'd,
I have not yet the benefit repaid.
That now the gen'rous Spartans may behold
In me their large beneficence not vain,
Here to their cause I consecrate my breath. 610

Not so, Megistias, interpos'd the king.
Thou and thy son retire. Again the feer.

FORBID it, thou eternally ador'd,
O Jove, confirm my persevering soul !
Nor let me these auspicious moments lose, 615
When to my bounteous patrons I may show,
That I deserv'd their favor. Thou, my child,
Dear Menalippus, heed the king's command,
And my paternal tenderness revere.
Thou from these ranks withdraw thee, to my use
Thy arms surrend'ring. Fortune will supply 621
New proofs of valour. Vanquish then, or find
A glorious grave ; but spare thy father's eye
'The bitter anguish to behold thy youth
Untimely bleed before him. Grief suspends 625
His speech, and interchangeably their arms

Impart the last embraces. Either weeps,
The hoary parent, and the blooming son.

BUT from his temples the pontifc wreath
Megistias now unloosens. He resigns 630
His hallow'd vestments ; while the youth in tears
The helmet o'er his parent's snowy locks,
O'er his broad chest adjusts the radiant mail.

DIENECE was nigh. Oppress'd by shame,
His downcast visage Menalippus hid 635
From him, who cheerful thus. Thou needst not
blush.

Thou hearst thy father and the king command,
What I suggested, thy departure hence.
Train'd by my care, a soldier thou return'st.
Go, practice my instructions. Oft in fields 640

Of future conflict may thy prowess call
Me to remembrance. Spare thy words. Farewel,

WHILE such contempt of life, such fervid zeal
To die with glory animate the Greeks,
Far diff'rent thoughts possess Argestes' soul. 645
Amaze and mingled terror chill his blood.
Cold drops, distill'd from ev'ry pore, bedew
His shiv'ring flesh. His bosom pants. His knees
Yield to their burden. Ghastly pale his cheeks,
Pale are his lips and trembling. Such the minds
Of slaves corrupt ; on them the beauteous face 651
Of virtue turns to horror. But these words
From Lacedæmon's chief the wretch relieve.

RETURN to Xerxes. Tell him, on this rock
The Grecians faithful to their trust await 655
His chosen myriads. Tell him, thou hast seen,

How

How far the lust of empire is below
A freeborn spirit ; that my death, which seals
My country's safety, is indeed a boon,
His folly gives, a precious boon, which Greece 660
Will by perdition to his throne repay.

HE said. The Persian hastens through the pass.
Once more the stern Diomedon arose.
Wrath overcast his forehead, while he spake.

YET more must stay and bleed. Detested
Thebes 665

Ne'er shall receive her traitors back. This spot
Shall see their perfidy atton'd by death,
Ev'n from that pow'r, to which their abject hearts
Have sacrific'd their faith. Nor dare to hope,
Ye vile deserters of the public weal, 670
Ye coward slaves, that, mingled in the heaps

Of gen'rous victims to their country's good,
You shall your shame conceal. Whoe'er shall pass
Along this field of glorious slain, and mark
For veneration ev'ry nobler corse ; 675
His heart, though warm in rapturous applause,
Awhile shall curb the transport to repeat
His execrations o'er such impious heads,
On whom that fate, to others yielding fame,
Is infamy and vengeance. Dreadful thus 680
On the pale Thebans sentence he pronounc'd,
Like Rhadamanthus from th' infernal seat
Of judgment, which inexorably dooms
The guilty dead to ever-during pain ;
While Phlegethon his flaming volumes rolls 685
Before their sight, and ruthless furies shake
Their hissing serpents. All the Greeks assent
In clamours, echoing through the concave rock.

Forth Anaxander in th' assembly stood,
Which he address'd with indignation feign'd. 690

If yet your clamours, Grecians, are allay'd,
Lo ! I appear before you to demand,
Why these my brave companions, who alone
Among the Thebans through dissuading crouds
Their passage forc'd to join your camp, should bear
The name of traitors ? By an exil'd wretch 696
We are traduc'd, by Demaratus, driv'n
From Spartan confines, who hath meanly sought
Barbarian courts for shelter. Hath he drawn
Such virtues thence, that Sparta, who before 700
Held him unworthy of his native sway,
Should trust him now, and doubt auxiliar friends ?
Injurious men ! We scorn the thoughts of flight.
Let Asia bring her numbers ; unconstrain'd,
We will confront them, and for Greece expire. 705

Thus

THUS in the garb of virtue he adorn'd
Necessity. Laconia's king perceiv'd
Through all its fair disguise the traitor's heart.
So, when at first mankind in science rude
Rever'd the moon, as bright in native beams, 710
Some sage, who walk'd with nature through her
works,
By wisdom led, discern'd the various orb,
Dark in itself, in foreign splendours clad.

LEONIDAS concludes. Ye Spartans, hear ;
Hear you, O Grecians, in our lot by choice 715
Partakers, destin'd to enroll your names
In time's eternal record, and enhance
Your country's lustre : lo ! the noontide blaze
Inflames the broad horizon. Each retire ;
Each in his tent invoke the pow'r of sleep 720
To brace his vigour, to enlarge his strength

For

For long endurance. When the sun descends,

Let each appear in arms. You, brave allies

Of Corinth, Phlius, and Mycenæ's tow'rs,

Arcadians, Locrians, must not yet depart.

725

While we repose, embattled wait. Retreat,

When we our tents abandon. I resign

To great Oileus' son supreme command.

Take my embraces, Æschylus. The fleet

Expects thee. To Themistocles report,

730

What thou hast seen and heard. O thrice farewell !

Th' Athenian answer'd. To yourselves, my friends,

Your virtues immortality secure,

Your bright examples victory to Greece.

RETAINING these injunctions, all dispers'd ;

735

While in his tent Leonidas remain'd

Apart with Agis, whom he thus bespake.

Yet in our fall the pond'rous hand of Greece

Shall

Shall Asia feel. This Persian's welcome tale
Of us, inextricably doom'd her prey, 740
As by the force of sorcery will wrap
Security around her, will suppress
All sense, all thought of danger. Brother, know,
That soon, as Cynthia from the vault of heav'n
Withdraws her shining lamp, through Asia's host
Shall massacre and desolation rage. 746

Yet not to base associates will I trust
My vast design. Their perfidy might warn
The unsuspecting foe, our fairest fruits
Of glory thus be wither'd. Ere we move, 750
While on the solemn sacrifice intent,
As Lacedæmon's ancient laws ordain,
Our pray'rs we offer to the tuneful nine,
Thou whisper through the willing ranks of Thebes
Slow and in silence to disperse and fly. 755

Now left by Agis, on his couch reclin'd,
The Spartan king thus meditates alone.

MY fate is now impending. O my soul,
What more auspicious period couldst thou chuse
For death, than now, when, beating high in joy,
Thou tell'st me, I am happy? If to live, 761
Or die, as virtue dictates, be to know
The purest bliss; if she her charms displays
Still lovely, still unfading, still serene
To youth, to age, to death: whatever be 765
Those other climes of happiness unchang'd,
Which heav'n in dark futurity conceals,
Still here, O virtue, thou art all our good.
Oh! what a black, unspeakable reverse
Must the unrighteous, must the tyrant prove? 770
What in the struggle of departing day,
When life's last glimpse, extinguishing, presents

Unknown

Unknown, inextricable gloom ? But how
Can I explain the terrors of a breast,
Where guilt resides ? Leonidas, forego 775
The horrible conception, and again
Within thy own felicity retire ;
Bow grateful down to him, who form'd thy mind
Of crimes unfruitful never to admit
The black impression of a guilty thought. 780
Else could I fearless by delib'rate choice
Relinquish life ? This calm from minds deprav'd
Is ever absent. Oft in them the force
Of some prevailing passion for a time
Suppresses fear. Precipitate they lose 785
The sense of danger ; when dominion, wealth,
Or purple pomp enchant the dazzled sight,
Pursuing still the joys of life alone.

BUT he, who calmly seeks a certain death,

When duty only, and the gen'ral good 790
Direct his courage, must a soul possess,
Which, all content deducing from itself,
Can by unerring virtue's constant light
Discern, when death is worthy of his choice.

THE man, thus great and happy, in the scope 795
Of his large mind is stretch'd beyond his date.
Ev'n on this shore of being he in thought,
Supremely bless'd, anticipates the good,
Which late posterity from him derives.

At length the hero's meditations close. 800
The swelling transport of his heart subsides
In soft oblivion ; and the silken plumes
Of sleep envelop his extended limbs.

The END of the Tenth Book.

LEONI-

LEONIDAS.

BOOK the ELEVENTH.

The Argument.

Leonidas, rising before sun-set, dismisses the forces under the command of Medon ; but observing a reluctance in him to depart, reminds him of his duty, and gives him an affectionate farewell. He then relates to his own select band a dream, which is interpreted by Megistias, arms himself, and marches in procession with his whole troop to an altar, newly raised on a neighbouring meadow ; there offers a sacrifice to the muses : he invokes the assistance of those goddesses ; he animates his companions ; then, placing himself at their head, leads them against the enemy in the dead of the night.

TH E day was cloſing. Agis left his tent.
He ſought his god-like brother. Him he
found

Stretch'd

Stretch'd o'er his tranquil couch. His looks retain'd

The cheerful tincture of his waking thoughts
To gladden sleep. So smile soft evening skies, 5
Yet streak'd with ruddy light, when summer's suns
Have veil'd their beaming foreheads. Transport
fill'd

The eye of Agis. Friendship swell'd his heart.
His yielding knee in veneration bent.

The hero's hand he kiss'd, then fervent thus. 10

O EXCELLENCE ineffable, receive
This secret homage ; and may gentle sleep
Yet longer seal thine eyelids, that, unblam'd,
I may fall down before thee. He concludes
In adoration of his friend divine, 15
Whose brow the shades of slumber now forsake.
So, when the rising sun resumes his state,

Some

Some white-rob'd magus on Euphrates side,
Or Indian seer on Ganges prostrate falls
Before th' emerging glory, to salute
That radiant emblem of th' immortal mind. 20

UPRISE both heroes. From their tents in arms
Appear the bands elect. The other Greeks
Are filing homeward. Only Medon stops.
Melissa's dictates he forgets awhile. 25
All inattentive to the warning voice
Of Meliboeus, earnest he surveys
Leonidas. Such constancy of zeal
In good Oileus' offspring brings the fire
To full remembrance in that solemn hour, 30
And draws these cordial accents from the king.

APPROACH me, Locrian. In thy look I trace
Consummate faith and love. But, vers'd in arms,
Against

Against thy gen'ral's orders wouldest thou stay ?
Go, prove to kind Oileus, that my heart 35
Of him was mindful, when the gates of death
I barr'd against his son. Yon gallant Greeks,
To thy commanding care from mine transfer'd,
Remove from certain slaughter. Last repair
To Lacedæmon. Thither lead thy fire. 40
Say to her senate, to her people tell,
Here didst thou leave their countrymen and king
On death resolv'd, obedient to the laws.

THE Locrian chief, restraining tears, replies.
My fire, left slumb'ring in the island-fane, 45
Awoke no more. Then joyful I shall meet
Him soon, the ~~king~~ made answer. Let thy worth
Supply thy father's. Virtue bids me die,
Thee live. Farewel. Now Medon's grief, o'er-
aw'd

By

By wisdom, leaves his long-suspended mind 50
To firm decision. He departs, prepar'd
For all the duties of a man, by deeds
To prove himself the friend of Sparta's king,
Melissa's brother, and Oileus' son.

THE gen'rous victims of the public weal, 55
Assembled now, Leonidas salutes,
His pregnant soul disburd'ning. O thrice hail !
Surround me, Grecians ; to my words attend.
This evening's sleep no sooner pres'd my brows,
Than o'er my head the empyreal form 60
Of heav'n-enthron'd Alcides was display'd.
I saw his magnitude divine. His voice
I heard, his solemn mandate to arise.
I rose. He bade me follow. I obey'd.
A mountain's summit, clear'd from mist, or cloud,
We reach'd in silence. Suddenly the howl 66
Of

Of wolves and dogs, the vulture's piercing shriek,
The yell of ev'ry beast and bird of prey
Discordant grated on my ear. I turn'd.
A surface hideous, delug'd o'er with blood, 70
Beyond my view illimitably stretch'd,
One vast expanse of horror. There supine,
Of huge dimension, cov'ring half the plain,
A giant corse lay mangled, red with wounds,
Delv'd in th' enormous flesh, which, bubbling, fed
Ten thousand thousand grisly beaks and jaws, 76
Insatiably devouring. Mute I gaz'd ;
When from behind I heard a second sound
Like surges, tumbling o'er a craggy shore.
Again I turn'd. An ocean there appear'd 80
With riven keels and shrouds, with shiver'd oars,
With arms and wel'tring carcasses bestrewn
InnumEROus. The billows foam'd in blood.
But where the waters, unobserv'd before,

Between

Between two adverse shores, contracting, roll'd 85

A stormy current, on the beach forlorn

One of majestic stature I descriy'd

In ornaments imperial. Oft he bent

On me his clouded eyeballs. Oft my name

He sounded forth in execrations loud ; 90

Then rent his splendid garments ; then his head

In rage divested of its graceful hairs.

Impatient now he ey'd a slender skiff,

Which, mounted high on boistrous waves, approach'd.

With indignation, with reluctant grief 95

Once more his sight reverting, he embark'd

Amid the perils of the frowning deep.

O thou, by glorious actions rank'd in heav'n,

I here exclaim'd, instruct me. What produc'd

This desolation ? Hercules reply'd. 100

Let thy astonish'd eye again survey

The

The scene, thy soul abhor'd. I look'd. I saw
A land, where plenty with disporting hands
Pour'd all the fruits of Amalthea's horn ;
Where bloom'd the olive; where the clustering vine
With her broad foliage mantled ev'ry hill ; 106
Where Ceres with exuberance enrob'd
The pregnant bosoms of the fields in gold ;
Where spacious towns, whose circuits proud con-
tain'd
The dazzling works of wealth along the banks 110
Of copious rivers shew'd their stately tow'rs,
The strength and splendour of the peop'ed land.
Then in a moment clouds obscur'd my view ;
At once all vanish'd from my waking eyes.

THRICE I salute the omen, loud began 115
The sage Megistias. In this mystic dream
I see my country's victories. The land,

The deep shall own her triumphs ; while the
tears

Of Asia and of Libya shall deplore
Their offspring, cast before the vulture's beak, 120
And ev'ry monstrous native of the main.

Those joyous fields of plenty picture Greece,
Enrich'd by conquest, and Barbarian spoils.

He, whom thou saw'st, in regal vesture clad,
Print on the sand his solitary step, 125

Is Xerxes, foil'd and fugitive. So spake
The rev'rend augur. Ev'ry bosom felt
Enthusiastic rapture, joy beyond

All sense, and all conception, but of those,
Who die to save their country. Here again 130
Th' exulting band Leonidas address'd.

SINCE happiness from virtue is deriv'd,
Who for his country dies, that moment proves

Most

Most happy, as most virtuous. Such our lot.

But go, Megistias. Instantly prepare 135

The sacred fuel, and the victim due;

That to the muses (so by Sparta's law

We are enjoin'd) our off'rings may be paid,

Before we march. Remember, from the rites

Let ev'ry sound be absent; not the fife,

140

Not ev'n the music-breathing flute be heard.

Meantime, ye leaders, ev'ry band instruct

To move in silence. Mindful of their charge

The chiefs depart. Leonidas provides

His various armour. Agis close attends, 145

His best assistant. First a breastplate arms

The spacious chest. O'er this the hero spreads

The mailed cuirass, from his shoulders hung.

A shining belt infolds his mighty loyns.

Next on his stately temples he erects 150

The plumed helm ; then grasps his pond'rous
shield :

Where nigh the center on projecting brass
Th' inimitable artist had emboss'd
The shape of great Alcides ; whom to gain
Two goddesses contended. Pleasure here 155

Won by soft wiles th' attracted eye ; and there
The form of Virtue dignify'd the scene.
In her majestic sweetness was display'd
The mind sublime and happy. From her lips
Seem'd eloquence to flow. In look serenē, 160

But fix'd intensely on the son of Jove,
She wav'd her hand, where, winding to the skies,
Her paths ascended. On the summit stood,
Supported by a trophy near to heav'n,
Fame, and pretended her eternal trump. 165
The youth attentive to her wisdom own'd
The prevalence of Virtue ; while his eye,

Fill'd

Fill'd by that spirit, which redeem'd the world
From tyranny and monsters, darted flames ;
Not undescry'd by Pleasure, where she lay 170
Beneath a gorgeous canopy. Around
Were flowrets strown, and wantonly in rills
A fount mæander'd. All relax'd her limbs ;
Nor wanting yet solicitude to gain,
What lost she fear'd, as struggling with despair, 175
She seem'd collecting ev'ry pow'r to charm :
Excess of sweet allurement she diffus'd
In vain. Still Virtue sway'd Alcides' mind.
Hence all his labours. Wrought with vary'd art,
The shield's external surface they enrich'd. 180

THIS portraiture of glory on his arm
Leonidas displays, and, tow'ring, strides
From his pavilion. Ready are the bands.
The chiefs assume their station. Torches blaze

Through ev'ry file. All now in silent pace 185

To join in solemn sacrifice proceed.

First Polydorus bears the hallow'd knife,

The sacred salt and barley. At his side

Diomedon sustains a weighty mace.

The priest, Megistias, follows like the rest 190

In polish'd armour. White, as winter's fleece,

A fillet round his shining helm reveals

The sacerdotal honors. By the horns,

Where laurels twine, with Alpheus Maron leads

The consecrated ox. And lo ! behind, 195

Leonidas advances. Never he

In such transcendent majesty was seen,

And his own virtue never so enjoy'd.

Successive move Dieneces the brave,

In hoary state Demophilus, the bloom 200

Of Dithyrambus, glowing in the hope

Of future praise, the gen'rous Agis next

Serene

Serene and graceful, last the Theban chiefs,
Repining, ignominious : then slow march
The troops all mute, nor shake their brazen arms.

Not from Thermopylæ remote the hills 206
Of Oeta, yielding to a fruitful dale,
Within their side, half-circling, had inclos'd
A fair expanse in verdure smooth. The bounds
Were edg'd by wood, o'erlook'd by snowy cliffs, 210
Which from the clouds bent frowning. Down a
rock

Above the loftiest summit of the grove
A tumbling torrent wore the shagged stone ;
Then, gleaming through the intervals of shade,
Attain'd the valley, where the level stream 215
Diffus'd refreshment. On its banks the Greeks
Had rais'd a rustic altar, fram'd of turf.
Broad was the surface, high in piles of wood,

All

All interspers'd with laurel. Purer deem'd,
Than river, lake, or fountain, in a vase 220
Old Ocean's briny element was plac'd
Before the altar ; and of wine unmix'd
Capacious goblets stood. Megistias now
His helm unloosen'd. With his snowy head,
Uncover'd, round the solemn pile he trod. 225
He shook a branch of laurel, scatt'ring wide
The sacred moisture of the main. His hand
Next on the altar, on the victim strew'd
The mingled salt and barley. O'er the horns
Th' inverted chalice, foaming from the grape, 230
Discharg'd a rich libation. Then approach'd
Diomedon. Megistias gave the sign.
Down sunk the victim by a deathful stroke,
Nor groan'd. The augur bury'd in the throat
His hallow'd steel. A purple current flow'd. 235
Now finok'd the structure, now it flam'd abroad

In

In sudden splendour. Deep in circling ranks
The Grecians press'd. Each held a sparkling
brand ;

The beaming lances intermix'd ; the helms,
The burnish'd armour multiply'd the blaze. 240
Leonidas drew nigh. Before the pile
His feet he planted. From his brows remov'd,
The casque to Agis he consign'd, his shield,
His spear to Dithyrambus ; then, his arms
Extending, forth in supplication broke. 245

HARMONIOUS daughters of Olympian Jove,
Who, on the top of Helicon ador'd,
And high Parnassus, with delighted ears
Bend to the warble of Castalia's stream,
Or Aganippe's murmur, if from thence 250
We must invoke your presence ; or along
The neighb'ring mountains with propitious steps

If now you grace your consecrated bow'rs,

Look down, ye Muses ; nor disdain to stand

Each an immortal witness of our fate.

255

But with you bring fair Liberty, whom Jove,

And you most honor. Let her sacred eyes

Approve her dying Grecians ; let her voice

In exultation tell the earth and heav'ns,

These are her sons. Then strike your tuneful

shells.

260

Record us guardians of our parent's age,

Our matron's virtue, and our children's bloom,

The glorious bulwarks of our country's laws,

Who shall ennable the historian's page,

Shall on the joyous festival inspire

265

With loftier strains the virgin's choral song.

Then, O celestial maids, on yonder camp

Let night sit heavy. Let a sleep like death

Weigh down the eye of Asia. O infuse

A cool,

A cool, untroubled spirit in our breasts, 270

Which may in silence guide our daring feet,

Controll our fury, nor by tumult wild

The friendly dark affright ; till dying groans

Of slaughter'd tyrants into horror wake

The midnight calm. Then turn destruction loose.

Let terror, let confusion rage around, 276

In one vast ruin heap the barb'rous ranks,

Their horse, their chariots. Let the spurning steed

Imbrue his hoofs in blood, the shatter'd cars

Crush with their brazen weight the prostrate necks

Of chiefs and kings, encircled, as they fall, 281

By nations slain. You, countrymen and friends,

My last commands retain. Your gen'ral's voice

Once more salutes you, not to rouse the brave,

Or minds, resolv'd and dauntless, to confirm. 285

Too well by this expiring blaze I see

Impatient valour flash from ev'ry eye.

O temper

O temper well that ardour, and your lips
Close on the rising transport. Mark, how sleep
Hath folded millions in his black embrace. 290

No sound is wasted from th' unnumber'd foe.

The winds themselves are silent. All conspires
To this great sacrifice, where thousands soon
Shall only wake to die. Their crowded train
This night perhaps to Pluto's dreary shades. 295
Ev'n Xerxes' ghost may lead, unless reserv'd
From this destruction to lament a doom
Of more disgrace, when Greece confounds that
pow'r,

Which we will shake. But look, the setting moon
Shuts on our darksome paths her waining horns. 300
Let each his head distinguish by a wreath
Of well-earn'd laurel. Then the victim share,
Then crown the goblet. Take your last repast;

With your forefathers, and the heroes old
You next will banquet in the bleſ'd abodes. 305

HERE ends their leader. Through th' encircling
croud

The agitation of their spears denotes
High ardour. So the ſpiry growth of pines
Is rock'd, when Æolus in eddies winds
Among their ſtately trunks on Pelion's brow. 310

The Acarnanian ſeer distributes swift
The ſacred laurel. Snatch'd in eager zeal,
Around each helm the woven leaves unite
Their glosſy verdure to the floating plumes.

Then is the vi&tim portion'd. In the bowl 315

* Then flows the vine's empurpled ſtream. Aloof
The Theban train in wan dejection mute
Brood o'er their shame, or cast affrighted looks
On that determin'd courage, which, unmov'd

At fate's approach, with cheerful lips could taste 320
The sparkling goblet, could in joy partake
That last, that glorious banquet. Ev'n the heart
Of Anaxander had forgot its wiles,
Dissembling fear no longer. Agis here,
Regardful ever of the king's command, 325
Accosts the Theban chiefs in whispers thus.

LEONIDAS permits you to retire.

While on the rites of sacrifice employ'd,
None heed your motions. Separate and fly
In silent pace. This heard, th' inglorious troop,
Their files dissolving, from the rest withdraw. 331
Unseen they moulder from the host like snow,
Freed from the rigour of constraining frost ;
Soon as the sun exerts his orient beam,
The transitory landscape melts in rills 335
Away, and structures, which delude the eye,

In sen-

In sensibly are lost. The solemn feast
Was now concluded. Now Laconia's king
Had reassum'd his arms. Before his step
The croud roll backward. In their gladden'd sight
His crest, illumin'd by uplifted brands, 341
Its purple splendour shakes. The tow'ring oak
Thus from a lofty promontory waves
His majesty of verdure. As with joy
The sailors mark his heav'n-ascending pride, 345
Which from afar directs their foamy course
Along the pathless ocean; so the Greeks
In transport gaze, as down their op'ning ranks
The king proceeds: from whose superior frame
A soul like thine, O Phidias, might conceive 350
In Parian marble, or effulgent brass
The form of great Apollo; when the god,
Won by the pray'rs of man's afflicted race,
In arms forsook his lucid throne to pierce

The

The monster Python in the Delphian vale. 355

Close by the hero Polydorus waits
To guide destruction through the Asian tents.

As the young eagle near his parent's side

In wanton flight essays his vig'rous wing,

Ere long with her to penetrate the clouds, 360

To dart impetuous on the fleecy train,

And dye his beak in gore ; by Sparta's king

The injur'd Polydorus thus prepares

His arm for death. He feasts his angry soul

On promis'd vengeance. His impatient thoughts

Ev'n now transport him furious to the seat 366

Of his long sorrows, not with fetter'd hands,

But now once more a Spartan with his spear,

His shield restor'd, to lead his country's bands,

And with them devaftation. Nor the rest 370

Neglect to form. Thick-rang'd, the helmets blend

Their various plumes, as intermingling oaks

Combine

Combine their foliage in Dodona's grove ;

Or as the cedars on the Syrian hills

Their shady texture spread. Once more the king,

O'er all the phalanx his consid'rate view 376

Extending, through the ruddy gleam descries

One face of gladness ; but the godlike van

He most contemplates : Agis, Alpheus there,

Megistias, Maron with Platæa's chief, 380

Dieneces, Demophilus are seen

With Thespia's youth : nor they their steady fight

From his remove, in speechless transport bound

By love, by veneration ; till they hear

His last injunction. To their diff'rent posts 385

They sep'rate. Instant on the dewy turf

Are cast th' extinguish'd brands. On all around

Drops sudden darkness, on the wood, the hill,

The snowy ridge, the vale, the silver stream.

It verg'd on midnight. Towr'd the hostile camp

In

In march compos'd and silent down the pass 391

The phalanx mov'd. Each patient bosom hush'd
Its struggling spirit, nor in whispers breath'd
The rapt'rous ardour, virtue then inspir'd.

So louring clouds along th' etherial void 395

In slow expansion from the gloomy north
Awhile suspend their horrors, destin'd soon
To blaze in lightnings, and to burst in storms.

The END of the Eleventh Book.



LEONI-

LEONIDAS.

BOOK the TWELFTH.

The Argument.

Leonidas and the Grecians penetrate through the Persian camp to the very pavilion of Xerxes, who avoids destruction by flight. The Barbarians are slaughtered in great multitudes, and their camp is set on fire. Leonidas conducts his men in good order back to Thermopylæ, engages the Persians, who were descended from the hills, and after numberless proofs of superior strength and valour, sinks down covered with wounds, and expires the last of all the Grecian commanders.

A C R O S S th' unguarded bound of Asia's
camp

Slow pass the Grecians: Through innum'rous
tents,

Where

Where all his mute and tranquil, they pursue
Their march sedate. Beneath the leaden hand
Of sleep lie millions motionless and deaf, 5
Nor dream of fate's approach. Their wary foes,
By Polydorus guided, still proceed.
Ev'n to the center of th' extensive host
They pierce unseen ; when lo ! th' imperial tent
Yet distant rose before them. Spreading round 10
Th' august pavilion, was an ample space
For thousands in arrangement. Here a band
Of chosen Persians, watchful o'er the king,
Held their nocturnal station. As the hearts
Of anxious nations, whom th' unsparing sword, 15
Or famine threaten, tremble at the sight
Of fear-engender'd phantoms in the sky,
Aerial hosts amid the clouds array'd,
Portending woe and death ; the Persian guard
In equal consternation now descry'd 20
The

The glimpse of hostile armour. All disband,
As if auxiliar to his favor'd Greeks
Pan held their banner, scatt'ring from its folds
Fear and confusion, which to Xerxes couch,
Swift-winged, fly ; thence shake the gen'ral camp,
Whose numbers issue naked, pale, unarm'd, 26
Wild in amazement, blinded by dismay,
To ev'ry foe obnoxious. In the breasts
Of thousands, gor'd at once, the Grecian steel
Reeks in destruction. Deluges of blood 30
Float o'er the field, and foam around the heaps
Of wretches, slain unconscious of the hand,
Which wastes their helpless multitude. Amaze,
Affright, distraction from his pillow chace
The lord of Asia, who in thought beholds 35
United Greece in arms. Thy lust of pow'r !
Thy hope of glory ! whither are they flown
With all thy pomp ? In this disast'rous hour

What

What could avail th' immeasurable range
Of thy proud camp, save only to conceal 40
Thy trembling steps, O Xerxes, while thou fly'st ?
To thy deserted couch with other looks
With other steps Leonidas is nigh.
Before him terror strides. Gigantic death,
And desolation at his side attend. 45

THE vast pavilion's empty space, where lamps
Of gold shed light and odours, now admits
The hero. Ardent throngs behind him press,
But miss their victim. To the ground are hurl'd
The glitt'ring ensigns of imperial state. 50
The diadem, the scepter, late ador'd
Through boundless kingdoms, underneath their
feet
In mingled rage and scorn the warriors crush
A sacrifice to freedom. They return

Again

Again to form. Leonidas exalts, 55
For new destruction his resistless spear ;
When double darkness suddenly descends:
The clouds, condensing, intercept the stars.
Black o'er the furrow'd main the raging east
In whirlwinds sweeps the surge. The coasts re-
sound. 60

The cavern'd rocks, the crashing forests roar.
Swift through the camp the hurricane impells
Its rude career; when Asia's numbers, veil'd
Amid the shelt'ring horrors of the storm,
I vade the victor's lance. The Grecians halt; 65
While to their gen'rals pregnant mind occurs
A new attempt and vast. Pepertual fire
Beside the tent of Xerxes from the hour,
He lodg'd his standards on the Malian plains,
Had shone. Among his Magi to adore 70
Great Horomazes was the monarch wont

Before

192 LEONIDAS. Book XII.

Before the sacred light. Huge piles of wood
Lay nigh, prepar'd to feed the constant flame.
On living embers these are cast. So wills
Leonidas. The phalanx then divides. 75
Four troops are form'd, by Dithyrambus led,
By Alpheus, by Diomedon. The last
Himself conducts. The word is giv'n. They seize
The burning fuel. Sparkling in the wind,
Destructive fire is brandish'd. All, enjoin'd 80
To reassemble at the regal tent,
By various paths the hostile camp invade.

Now devastation, unconfin'd, involves
The Malian fields. Among Barbarian tents
From diff'rent stations fly consuming flames. 85
The Greeks afford no respite; and the storm
Exasperates the blaze. To ev'ry part
The conflagration like a sea expands,

One

One waving surface of unbounded fire.

In ruddy volumes mount the curling flames. 90
To heav'n's dark vault, and paint the midnight
clouds.

So, when the north emits his purpled lights,
The undulated radiance, streaming wide,
As with a burning canopy invests
Th' ethereal concave. Oéta now disclos'd 95
His forehead, glitt'ring in eternal frost ;
While down his rocks the foamy torrents shone.
Far o'er the main the pointed rays were thrown ;
Night snatch'd her mantle from the ocean's breast ;
The billows glimmer'd from the distant shores. 100

BUT lo ! a pillar huge of smoke ascends,
Which overshades the field. There horror, there
Leonidas presides. Command he gave
To Polydorus, who, exulting, shew'd,

Where Asia's horse, and warlike cars possess'd 105

A crowded station. At the hero's nod

Devouring Vulcan riots on the stores

Of Ceres, empty'd of the ripen'd grain,

On all the tribute from her meadows brown,

By rich Thessalia render'd to the scythe. 110

A flood of fire envelopes all the ground.

The cordage bursts around the blazing tents.

Down sink the roofs on suffocated throngs,

Close-wedg'd by fear. The Libyan chariot burns.

Th' Arabian camel, and the Persian steed 115

Bound through a burning deluge. Wild with pain

They shake their singed manes. Their madding
hoofs

Dash through the blood of thousands, mix'd with

flames,

Which rage, augmented by the whirlwind's blast.

MEAN-

MEANTIME the scepter'd lord of half the globe
From tent to tent precipitates his flight. 121

Dispers'd are all his satraps. Pride herself
Shuns his dejected brow. Despair alone
Waits on th' imperial fugitive, and shews,
As round the camp his eye, distracted, roves, 125

No limits to destruction. Now is seen
Aurora, mounting from her eastern hill
In rosy sandals, and with dewy locks.
The winds subside before her ; darkness flies ;
A stream of light proclaims the cheerful day, 130

Which sees at Xerxes' tent the conqu'ring bands,
All reunited. What could fortune more
To aid the valiant, what to gorge revenge ?

Lo ! desolation o'er the adverse host
Hath empty'd all her terrors. Ev'n the hand 135

Of languid slaughter dropt the crimson steel ;
Nor nature longer can sustain the toil

Of unremitting conquest. Yet what pow'r
Among these sons of Liberty reviv'd
Their drooping warmth, new-strung their nerves,
recall'd

140

Their weary'd swords to deeds of brighter fame ?
What, but th' inspiring hope of glorious death
To crown their labours, and th' auspicious look
Of their heroic chief, which, still unchang'd,
Still in superior majesty declar'd,

145

No toil had yet relax'd his matchless strength,
Nor worn the vigour of his godlike soul.

BACK to the pass in gentle march he leads
Th' embattled warriors. They behind the shrubs,
Where Medon sent such numbers to the shades, 150
In ambush lie. The tempest is o'erblown.
Soft breezes only from the Malian wave
O'er each grim face, besmeard with smoke and gore,
Their

Their cool refreshment breathe. The healing gale,
A crystal rill near Oeta's verdant feet 155
Dispel the languor from their harras'd nerves,
Fresh brac'd by strength returning. O'er their
heads

Lo ! in full blaze of majesty appears
Melissa, bearing in her hand divine
Th' eternal guardian of illustrious deeds, 160
The sweet Phœbean lyre. Her graceful train
Of white-rob'd virgins, seated on a range
Half down the cliff, o'ershadowing the Greeks,
All with concordant strings, and accents clear
A torrent pour of melody, and swell
A high, triumphal, solemn dirge of praise, 165
Anticipating fame. Of endless joys
In bles'd Elysium was the song. Go, meet
Lycurgus, Solon and Zaleucus sage,
Let them salute the children of their laws.

Meet Homer, Orpheus and th' Ascræan bard, 170

Who with a spirit, by ambrosial food

Refin'd, and more exalted, shall contend

Your splendid fate to warble through the bow'r's

Of amaranth and myrtle ever young

Like your renown. Your ashes we will cull. 175

In yonder fane deposited, your urns

Dear to the Muses shall our lays inspire.

Whatever off'rings, genius, science, art

Can dedicate to virtue, shall be yours,

The gifts of all the Muses, to transmit 180

You on th' enliven'd canvas, marble, brass,

In wisdom's volume, in the poet's song,

In ev'ry tongue, through ev'ry age and clime,

You of this earth the brightest flow'r's, not cropt,

Transplanted only to immortal bloom 185

Of praise with men, of happiness with gods.

THE

THE Grecian valour on religion's flame

To ecstasy is wasted. Death is nigh,

As by the Graces fashion'd, he appears

A beauteous form. His adamantin gate

190

Is half unfolded. All in transport catch

A glimpse of immortality. Elate

In rapturous delusion they believe,

That to behold and solemnize their fate

The goddesses are present on the hills

195

With celebrating lyres. In thought serene

Leonidas the kind deception bless'd,

Nor undeceiv'd his soldiers. After all

Th' incessant labours of the horrid night,

Through blood, through flames continu'd, he pre-

pares

200

In order'd battle to confront the pow'rs

Of Hyperanthes from the upper streights.

Not long the Greeks in expectation wait
Impatient. Sudden with tumultuous shouts
Like Nile's rude current, where in deafning roar
Prone from the steep of Elephantis falls 206
A sea of waters, Hyperanthes pours
His chosen numbers on the Grecian camp
Down from the hills precipitant. No foes
He finds. The Thebans join him. In his van 210
They march conductors. On, the Persians roll
In martial thunder through the sounding pass.
They issue forth impetuous from its mouth.
That moment Sparta's leader gave the sign;
When, as th' impulsive ram in forceful sway 215
O'erturns a nodding rampart from its base,
And strews a town with ruin, so the band
Of ferry'd heroes down the Malian steep,
Tremendous depth, the mix'd battalions swept
Of Thebes and Persia. There no waters flow'd.

Abrupt

Abrupt and naked all was rock beneath. 221

Leonidas, incens'd, with grappling strength 221

Dash'd Anaxander on a pointed crag; 221

Compos'd, then gave new orders. At the word

His phalanx, wheeling, penetrates the pass. 125

Astonish'd Persia stops in full career.

Ev'n Hyperanthes shrinks in wonder back.

Confusion drives fresh numbers from the shore.

The Malian ooze o'erwhelms them. Sparta's king

Still presses forward, till an open breadth 130

Of fifty paces yields his front extent

To proffer battle. Hyperanthes soon

Recalls his warriors, dissipates their fears.

Swift on the great Leonidas a cloud

Of darts is show'r'd. Th' encount'ring armies

close. 135

WHO first, sublimest hero, felt thy arm?

What rivers heard along their echoing banks
Thy name, in curses sounded from the lips
Of noble mothers, wailing for their sons ?
What towns with empty monuments were fill'd 240
For those, whom thy unconquerable sword
This day to vultures cast ? First Beslus died,
A haughty satrap, whose tyrannic sway
Despoil'd Hyrcania of her golden sheaves,
And laid her forests waste. For him the bees 245
Among the branches interwove their sweets ;
For him the fig was ripen'd, and the vine
In rich profusion o'er the goblet foam'd.
Then Dinis bled. On Hermus' side he reign'd ;
He long assiduous, unavailing woo'd 250
The martial queen of Caria. She disdain'd
A lover's soft complaint. Her rigid ear
Was fram'd to watch the tempest, while it rag'd,
Her eye accustom'd on the rolling deck

To

To brave the turgid billow. Near the shore 255

She now is present in her pinnace light,

The spectacle of glory crouds her breast

With diff'rent passions. Valiant, she applauds

The Grecian valour ; faithful, she laments

Her sad presage of Persia ; prompts her son 260

To emulation of the Greeks in arms,

And of herself in loyalty. By fate

Is she reserv'd to signalize that day

Of future shame, when Xerxes must behold

The blood of nations overflow his decks, 265

And to their bottom tinge the briny floods

Of Salamis ; whence she with Asia flies,

She only not inglorious. Low reclines

Her lover now, on Hermus to repeat

Her name no more, nor tell the vocal groves 270

His fruitless sorrows. Next Maduces fell,

A Paphlagonian. Born amid the sound

Of

Of chafing surges, and the roar of winds,
He o'er th' inhospitable Euxin foam
Was wont from high Carambis' rock to ken 175
Ill-fated keels, which cut the Pontic stream,
Then with his dire associates through the deep
For spoil and slaughter guide his savage prow.
Him dogs will rend ashore. From Medus far,
Their native current, two bold brothers died, 180
Sisamnes and Tithraustes, potent lords
Of rich domains. On these Mithrines grey,
Cilician prince, Lilæus, who had left
The balmy fragrance of Arabia's fields
With Babylonian Tenagon expir'd. 185

THE growing carnage Hyperanthes views
Indignant, fierce in vengeful ardour strides
Against the victor. Each his lance pretends;
But Asia's numbers interpose their shields,

Solicitous

Solicitous to guard a prince rever'd : 190

Or thither fortune whelm'd the tide of war,

His term protracting for augmented fame.

So two proud vessels, lab'ring on the foam,

Present for battle their destructive beaks ;

When ridgy seas, by hurricanes upturn, 195

In mountainous commotion dash between,

And either deck, in black'ning tempests veil'd,

Waft from its distant foe. More fiercely burn'd

Thy spirit, mighty Spartan. Such dismay

Relax'd thy foes, that each Barbarian heart 200

Resign'd all hopes of victory. The steeds

Of day were climbing their meridian height.

Continu'd shouts of onset from the pass

Resounded o'er the plain. Artuchus heard.

When first the spreading tumult had alarm'd 205

His distant quarter, starting from repose,

He down the valley of Spercheos rush'd

To

To aid his regal master. Asia's camp
 He found the seat of terror and despair. 309

As in some fruitful clime, which late hath known
 The rage of winds and floods, although the storm
 Be heard no longer, and the deluge fled,
 Still o'er the wasted region nature mourns
 In melancholy silence ; through the grove
 With prostrate glories lie the stately oak, 315

Th' uprooted elm and beach ; the plain is spread
 With fragments, swept from villages o'erthrown,
 Around the pastures flocks and herds are cast
 In dreary piles of death : so Persia's host
 In terror mute one boundless scene displays 320

Of devastation. Half-devour'd by fire,
 Her tall pavilions, and her martial cars
 Deform the wide encampment. Here in gore
 Her princes welter, nameless thousands there,
 Not victims all to Greeks. In gasping heaps 325

Book XII. L E O N I D A S.

207

Barbarians, mangled by Barbarians, shew'd
The wild confusion of that direful night ;
When, wanting signals, and a leader's care,
They rush'd on mutual slaughter. Xerxes' tent
On its exalted summit, when the dawn 330
First streak'd the orient sky, was wont to bear
The golden form of Mithra, clos'd between
Two lucid crystals. This the gen'ral host
Observ'd, their awful signal to arrange
In arms compleat, and numberless to watch 335
Their monarch's rising. This conspicuous blaze
Artuchus places in th' accustom'd seat.
As, after winds have ruffled by a storm
The plumes of darkness, when her welcome face
The morning lifts serene, each wary swain 340
Collects his flock dispers'd ; the neighing steed,
The herds forsake their shelter : all return
To well-known pastures, and frequented streams :

So

So now this cheering signal on the tent
 Revives each leader. From inglorious flight 245
 Their scatter'd bands they call, their wonted ground
 Resume, and hail Artuchus. From their swarms.
 A force he culls. Thermopylæ he seeks.
 Fell shouts in horrid dissonance precede.

His phalanx swift Leonidas commands 250
 To circle backward from the Malian bay.
 Their order changes. Now, half-orb'd, they stand
 By Oeta's fence protected from behind,
 With either flank united to the rock.
 As by th' excelling architect dispos'd 255
 To shield some haven, a stupendous mole,
 Fram'd of the grove and quarry's mingled strength,
 In ocean's bosom penetrates afar:
 There, pride of art, immoveable it looks
 On Eolus and Neptune; there defies 290
 Those

Those potent gods combin'd : unyielding thus,
The Grecians stood a solid mass of war
Against Artuchus, join'd with numbers new
To Hyperanthes. In the foremost rank
Leonidas his dreadful station held.

295

Around him soon a spacious void was seen
By flight, or slaughter in the Persian van.
In gen'rous shame and wrath Artuchus burns,
Discharging full at Lacedæmon's chief
An iron-studded mace. It glanc'd aside,

300

Turn'd by the massy buckler. Prone to earth
The satrap fell. Alcander aim'd his point,
Which had transfix'd him prostrate on the rock,
But for th' immediate succour, he obtain'd
From faithful soldiers, lifting on their shields

305

A chief belov'd. Not such Alcander's lot.
An arrow wounds his heart. Supine he lies,
The only Theban, who to Greece preserv'd

Unviolated

Unviolated faith. Physician sage,
On pure Cithæron healing herbs to cull 380
Was he accustom'd, to expatriate o'er
The Heliconian pastures, where no plants
Of poison spring, of juice salubrious all,
Which vipers, winding in their verdant track,
Drink and expel the venom from their tooth, 385
Dipt in the sweetness of that soil divine.
On him the brave Artontes sinks in death,
Renown'd through wide Bithynia, ne'er again
The clam'rous rites of Cybelé to share ;
While echo murmurs through the hollow caves 390
Of Berecynthian Dindymus. The strength
Of Alpheus sent him to the shades of night.
Ere from the dead was disengag'd the spear,
Huge Abradates, glorying in his might,
Surpassing all of Cissian race, advanc'd 395
To grapple ; planting firm his foremost step,

The

The victor's throat he grasp'd. At Nemea's games
The wrestler's chaplet Alpheus had obtain'd.
He summons all his art. Oblique the stroke
Of his swift foot supplants the Persian's heel. 400
He, falling, clings by Alpheus' neck, and drags
His foe upon him. In the Spartan's back
Enrag'd Barbarians fix their thronging spears.
To Abradates' chest the weapons pass ;
They rivet both in death. This Maron sees, 405
This Polydorus, frowning. Victims, strewn
Before their vengeance, hide their brother's corse.
At length the gen'rous blood of Maron warms
The sword of Hyperanthes. On the spear
Of Polydorus falls the pond'rous ax 410
Of Sacian Mardus. From the yielding wood
The steely point is sever'd. Undismay'd,
The Spartan stoops to rear the knotted mace,
Left by Artuchus ; but thy fatal blade,

Abrocomes,

Abrocomes, that dreadful instant watch'd 345
To rend his op'ning side. Unconquer'd still,
Swift he discharges on the Sacian's front
A pond'rous blow, which burst the scatter'd brain.
Down his own limbs meantime a torrent flows
Of vital crimson. Smiling, he reflects
On sorrow finish'd, on his Spartan name, 350
Renew'd in lustre. Sudden to his side
Springs Dithyrambus. Through th' uplifted arm
Of Mindus, pointing a malignant dart
Against the dying Spartan, he impell'd
His spear. The point with violence unspent, 355
Urg'd by such vigour, reach'd the Persian's throat
Above his corselet. Polydorus stretch'd
His languid hand to Thespias friendly youth,
Then bow'd his head in everlasting peace.
While Mindus, wasted by his streaming wound, 360
Beside him faints and dies. In flow'ring prime

He

He, lord of Colchis, from a bride was torn
His tyrant's hasty mandate to obey.

She tow'd the Euxin sends her plaintive sighs ;
She woos in tender piety the winds : 365

Vain is their favor ; they can never breathe
On his returning sail. At once a croud
Of eager Persians seize the victor's spear.
One of his nervous hands retains it fast.

The other bares his falchion. Wounds and death
He scatters round. Sosarmes feels his arm 371
Loft from the shoulder. Zatis leaves entwin'd
His fingers round the long-disputed lance.

On Mardon's reins descends the pond'rous blade,
Which half divides his body. Pheron strides 375
Across the pointed ash. His weight o'ercomes
The weary'd Thespian, who resigns his hold ;
But cleaves th' elate Barbarian to the brain.
Abrocomes darts forward, shakes his steel,

Whose

Whose lightning threatens death. The wary
Greek

450

Wards with his sword the well-directed stroke,
Then, closing, throws the Persian. Now what aid
Of mortal force, or interposing heav'n
Preserves the eastern hero? Lo! the friend

Of Teribazus. Eager to avenge

455

That lov'd, that lost companion, and defend
A brother's life, beneath the sinewy arm,
Outstretch'd, the sword of Hyperanthes pass'd
Through Dithyrambus. All the strings of life
At once relax; nor fame, nor Greece demand
More from his valour. Prostrate now he lies
In glories, ripen'd on his blooming head.

Him shall the Thespian maidens in their songs

Record once loveliest of the youthful train,

The gentle, wise, beneficent and brave,

465

Grace of his lineage, and his country's boast,

Now

Now fall'n, Elysium to his parting soul
Uncloses. So the cedar, which supreme
Among the groves of Libanus hath tow'rd,
Uprooted, low'r'd his graceful top, preferr'd 470
For dignity of growth some royal dome,
Or heav'n-devoted fabric to adorn.

Diomedon bursts forward. Round his friend
He heaps destruction. Troops of wailing ghosts
Attend thy shade, fall'n hero ! Long prevail'd 475
His furious arm in vengeance uncontroll'd ;
Till four Assyrians on his shelving spear,
Ere from a Cissian's prostrate body freed,
Their pond'rous maces all discharge. It broke.

Still with a shatter'd truncheon he maintains 480
Unequal fight. Impetuous through his eye
The well-aim'd fragment penetrates the brain
Of one bold warrior ; there the splinter'd wood,
Infix'd, remains. The hero last unsheathes

His

His falchion broad. A second sees aghast 415

His entrails open'd. Sever'd from a third,

The head, steel-cas'd, descends. In blood is roll'd

The grizly beard. That effort breaks the blade

Short from its hilt. The Grecian stands disarm'd.

The fourth, Astaspes, proud Chaldaean lord, 420

Is nigh. He lifts his iron-plated mace.

This, while a cluster of auxiliar friends

Hang on the Grecian shield, to earth deprest'd,

Loads with unerring blows the batter'd helm;

Till on the ground Diomedon extends 425

His mighty limbs. So, weaken'd by the force

Of some tremendous engine, which the hand

Of Mars impells, a citadel, high-tow'rd,

Whence darts and fire and ruins long have aw'd

Begirding legions, yields at last, and spreads 430

Its disuniting ramparts on the ground;

Joy fills th' assailants, and the battle's tide

Whelms

Whelms o'er the widening breach : the Persian
thus

O'er the late-fear'd Diomedon advanc'd
Against the Grecian remnant : when behold 505

Leonidas. At once their ardour froze.

He had awhile behind his friends retir'd,
Oppress'd by labour. Pointless was his spear,
His buckler cleft. As, overworn by storms,
A vessel steers to some protecting bay ; 510

Then, soon as timely gales, inviting, curl
The azure floods, to Neptune shews again
Her masts apparell'd fresh in shrouds and sails,

Which court the vig'rous wind : so Sparta's king,
In strength repair'd, a spear and buckler new 515

Presents to Asia. From her bleeding ranks
Hydarnes, urg'd by destiny, approach'd.

He, proudly vaunting, left an infant race,
A spouse lamenting on the distant verge

Of Bactrian Ochus. Victory in vain 520

He, parting, promis'd. Wanton hope will sport

Round his cold heart no longer. Grecian spoils,

Imagin'd triumphs, pictur'd on his mind,

Fate will erase forever. Through the targe,

The thick-mail'd corselet his divided chest 525

Of bony strength admits the hostile spear.

Leonidas draws back the steely point,

Bent and enfeebled by the forceful blow.

Meantime within his buckler's rim, unseen,

Amphistreus stealing, in th' ungarded flank 530

His dagger struck. In slow effusion ooz'd

The blood, from Hercules deriv'd ; but death

Not yet had reach'd his mark. Th' indignant king

Gripes irresistibly the Persian's throat.

He drags him prostrate. False, corrupt and base,

Fallacious, fell, preeminent was he 536

Among tyrannic satraps. Phrygia pin'd

Beneath th' oppression of his ruthless sway.
Her ~~soil~~ had once been fruitful. Once her towns
Were populous and rich. The direful change 540
To naked fields and crumbling roofs declar'd,
Th' accurs'd Amphistreus govern'd. As the spear
Of Tyrian Cadmus rivetted to earth
The poi's'nous dragon, whose infectious breath
Had blasted all Bœotia ; so the king, 545
On prone Amphistreus trampling, to the rock
Nails down the tyrant, and the fractur'd staff
Leaves in his panting body. But the blood,
Great hero, dropping from thy wound, revives
The hopes of Persia. Thy unyielding arm 550
Upholds the conflict still. Against thy shield
The various weapons shiver, and thy feet
With glitt'ring points surround. The Lydian sword,
The Persian dagger leave their shatter'd hilts ;
Bent is the Caspian scymetar : the lance, 555

The javelin, dart and arrow all combine
Their fruitless efforts. From Alcides sprung,
Thou standst unshaken like a Thracian hill,
Like Rhodope, or Hæmus; where in vain
The thund’rer plants his livid bolt; in vain 560
Keen-pointed lightnings pierce th’ encrusted snow;
And winter, beating with eternal war,
Shakes from his dreary wings discordant storms,
Chill sleet, and clatt’ring hail. Advancing bold,
His rapid lance Abrocomes in vain 565
Aims at the forehead of Laconia’s chief.
He, not unguarded, rears his active blade
Athwart the dang’rous blow, whose fury wastes
Above his crest in air. Then, swiftly wheel’d,
The pond’rous weapon cleaves the Persian’s knee 570
Sheer through the parted bone. He sidelong falls.
Crush’d on the ground beneath contending feet,
Great Xerxes’ brother yields the last remains

Or

Of tortur'd life. Leonidas persists ;
Till Agis calls Dieneces, alarms 575
Demophilus, Megistias : they o'er piles
Of Allarodian and Sasperian dead
Haste to their leader : they before him raise
The brazen bulwark of their massy shields.
The foremost rank of Asia stands and bleeds ; 580
The rest recoil : but Hyperanthes swift
From band to band his various host pervades,
Their drooping hopes rekindles, in the brave
New fortitude excites : the frigid heart
Of fear he warms. Astaspes first obeys, 585
Vain of his birth, from ancient Belus drawn,
Proud of his wealthy stores, his stately domes,
More proud in recent victory : his might
Had foil'd Platæa's chief. Before the front
He strides impetuous. His triumphant mace 590
Against the brave Dieneces he bends.

The

The weighty blow bears down th' oppofing shield,
And breaks the Spartan's shoulder. Idle hangs
The weak defence, and loads th' inactive arm,
Depriv'd of ev'ry function. Agis bares 595
His vengeful blade. At two well levell'd strokes
Of both his hands, high brandishing the mace,
He mutilates the foe. A Sacian chief
Springs on the victor. Jaxartes' banks
To this brave savage gave his name and birth. 600
His look erect, his bold deportment spoke
A gallant spirit, but untam'd by laws,
With dreary wilds familiar, and a race
Of rude Barbarians, horrid, as their clime.
From its direction glanc'd the Spartan spear, 605
Which, upward borne, o'erturn'd his iron cone.
Black o'er his forehead fall the naked locks ;
They aggravate his fury : while his foe
Repeats the stroke, and penetrates his chest:

Th'

Th' intrepid Sacian through his breast and back 610
Receives the griding steel. Along the staff
He writhes his tortur'd body ; in his grasp
A barbed arrow from his quiver shakes ;
Deep in the streaming throat of Agis hides
The deadly point ; then grimly smiles and dies. 615

FROM him fate hastens to a nobler prey,
Dieneces. His undefended frame
The shield abandons, sliding from his arm.
His breast is gor'd by javelins. On the foe
He hurls them back, extracted from his wounds. 620
Life, yielding slow to destiny, at length
Forsakes his riven heart ; nor less in death
Thermopylæ he graces, than before
By martial deeds and conduct. What can stem
The barb'rous torrent ? Agis bleeds. His spear 625
Lies useless, irrecoverably plung'd.

In Jaxartes' body. Low reclines
Dieneces. Leonidas himself,
O'erlabour'd, wounded, with his dinted sword
The rage of war can exercise no more. 630

One last, one glorious effort age performs.
Demophilus, Megistias join their might.
They check the tide of conquest ; while the spear
Of slain Dieneces to Sparta's chief
The fainting Agis bears. The pointed ash, 635

In that dire hand for battle rear'd anew,
Blasts ev'ry Persian's valour. Back in heaps
They roll, confounded, by their gen'ral's voice
In vain exhorted longer to endure
The ceaseless waste of that unconquer'd arm. 640

So, when the giants from Olympus chac'd
Th' inferior gods, themselves in terror shun'd
Th' incessant streams of lightning, where the hand
Of heav'n's great father with eternal might
Sustain'd

Sustain'd the dreadful conflict. O'er the field 645

Awhile Bellona gives the battle rest;

When Thespias's leader and Megistias drop

At either side of Lacedæmon's king.

Beneath the weight of years and labour bend

The hoary warriors. Not a groan molests 650

Their parting spirits; but in death's calm night

All-silent sinks each venerable head:

Like aged oaks, whose deep-descending roots

Had pierc'd resistless through a craggy slope;

There during three long centuries have brav'd 655

Malignant Eurus, and the boist'rous north;

Till bare and sapless by corroding time

Without a blast their mossy trunks recline

Before their parent hill. Not one remains,

But Agis, near Leonidas, whose hand 660

The last kind office to his friend performs,

Extracts the Sacian's arrow. Life, releas'd,

Pours

Pours forth in crimson floods. O Agis, pale
Thy placid features, rigid are thy limbs ;
They lose their graces. Dimm'd, thy eyes reveal
The native goodness of thy heart no more. 666
Yet other graces spring. The noble cors~~e~~
Leonidas surveys. A pause he finds
To mark, how lovely are the patriot's wounds,
And see those honors on the breast, he lov'd. 670

BUT Hyperanthes from the trembling ranks
Of Asia tow'rs, inflexibly resolv'd
The Persian glory to redeem, or fall.
The Spartan, worn by toil, his languid arm
Uplifts once more. He waits the dauntless prince.
The heroes now stand adverse. Each awhile 675
Restrains his valour. Each, admiring, views
His godlike foe. At length their brandish'd points
Provoke the contest, fated soon to close

The

Book XII. L E O N I D A S. 227-

The long-continu'd horrors of the day. 680

Fix'd in amaze and fear, the Asian throng,
Unmov'd and silent, on their bucklers pause.

Thus on the wastes of India, while the earth
Beneath him groans, the elephant is seen,

His huge proboscis writhing, to defy 685
The strong rhinoceros, whose pond'rous horn

Is newly whetted on a rock. Anon
Each hideous bulk encounters. Earth her groan

Redoubles. Trembling, from their covert gaze
The savage inmates of surrounding woods 690

In distant terror. By the vary'd art
Of either chief the dubious combat long

Its great event retarded. Now his lance
Far through the hostile shield Laconia's king

Impell'd. Aside the Persian swung his arm. 695
Beneath it pass'd the weapon, which his targe

Encumber'd. Hopes of conquest and renown

Elate

Elate his courage. Sudden he directs
His rapid javelin to the Spartan's throat.
But he his wary buckler upward rais'd, 700
Which o'er his shoulder turn'd the glancing steel;
For one last effort then his scatter'd strength
Collecting, levell'd with resistless force
The massive orb, and dash'd its brazen verge
Full on the Persian's forehead. Down he sunk, 705
Without a groan expiring, as o'erwhelm'd
Beneath a marble fragment, from its seat
Heav'd by a whirlwind, sweeping o'er the ridge
Of some aspiring mansion. Gen'rous prince !
What could his valour more ? His single might 710
He match'd with great Leonidas, and fell
Before his native bands. The Spartan king
Now stands alone. In heaps his slaughter'd friends,
All stretch'd around him, lie. The distant foes
Show'r on his head innumerable darts. 715

From

Book XII. L E O N I D A S. 229

From various fluices gush the vital floods ;
They stain his fainting limbs. Nor yet with pain
His brow is clouded ; but those beauteous wounds,
The sacred pledges of his own renown,
And Sparta's safety, in serenest joy 720
His closing eye contemplates. Fame can twine
No brighter laurels round his glorious head ;
His virtue more to labour fate forbids,
And lays him now in honorable rest
To seal his country's liberty by death. 725

The END of the Twelfth and last Book.



E R R A T A

Page 14. line 222 for . put ,

141. line 464 relinquishing read relinquishing

465 Persian read Persians

А Т А Й И С

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